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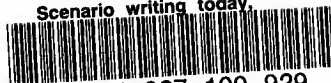
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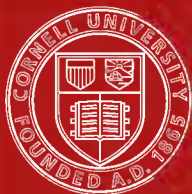
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# SCENARIO WRITING TODAY

BY  
GRACE LYTTON



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
*The Riverside Press Cambridge*

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## INTRODUCTION

It gives me pleasure to write a few words of introduction to a volume which I believe to be one of unique worth and utility. The author, whose first book it is, has written a book of which a veteran in the art of writing might well be proud. She has set forth, in a clear and convincing style, the principles of scenario writing, not from the theoretical but from the practical standpoint, and her logical plan of unfolding her subject makes it strikingly different from the ordinary essays one now finds filling magazine pages, claiming to teach amateurs an easy and quick way of writing the screen story. To be able to tell that certain things are necessary is simple enough, and innumerable authors can write exhaustive treatises about the technique of their art: but to have the capacity to show the steps of approach to success, and inspire learners with the ambition to work steadily toward it, is the very genius of teaching. This is what the young author has accomplished in *Scenario Writing Today*, which lives up to its title in a thorough and complete manner, omitting nothing which is vital to the topic, and dwelling with particular emphasis

upon those special parts of it that are most obscure to beginners and that most need elucidation. The initial chapter, establishing, in a wonderfully lucid way, the difference between the process of writing the literary story and the screen story, is of great value, being very original and unusual in its deductions. The picturesque, colorful style of the writer adds power to her unfolding of her subject all through the book, but nowhere more than in the chapter entitled "The Thought back of Your Story," which will appeal with force to the amateur who has struggled hard and weariedly to bring his dim and wandering ideas to the light of day. The chapters on "Plot" are not only well done, but finely done, and should stimulate every student to labor harder than ever to produce excellent work. While the whole tone of the volume is encouraging, optimistic, and delightfully sympathetic, Grace Lytton seems to utter constantly between the lines an exhortation to splendid and undaunted effort; so far as her personality reveals itself in a very modest and unaffected volume, one divines the characteristics of sane vigor and cheerful perseverance. This touch of personality lends the volume particular charm. Unlike many educational books there is a sprightliness and intimacy about it which lifts it above a mere treatise and se-

cures for it a place on the shelf where we house pet books, of human interest. This is, perhaps, most apparent in the chapter dealing with "Locale," where the author gives herself some little liberty in introducing incidents, and also, in the one on "Characters," which is very gracefully done, and contains some remarks that show keen critical discernment. The "Commercial Side" is of particular value to beginners, giving suggestions which answer questions constantly addressed to scenario editors, but which they, naturally, never answer. In fact, *Scenario Writing Today* should be looked upon by this portion of the working world with gratitude, furnishing as it does a brief cyclopædia of up-to-date knowledge that obviates the necessity of the perpetual appeal of amateurs to their experience. But it is not as a cyclopædia that the book is of most value, but as a remarkably successful attempt at systematizing and clarifying the mass of recently acquired learning upon the profession of screen story writing. What readers will appreciate, but only the practised writer, perhaps, will appreciate at its full worth, is the "hard writing that makes easy reading" in this book. The author has evidently spent unstinted pains upon the task of simplifying and elucidating her subject. It is pleasant reading; any one who begins it will be

likely to read it through to the end with satisfaction as well as with profit. And I take pleasure in repeating that it may well be received by the world of young writers on the art of scenario writing, with the cordial welcome due to an exceedingly worthy and very much-needed book.

FLORENCE HULL WINTERBURN

## SCENARIO WRITING TODAY



# SCENARIO WRITING TODAY

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## CHAPTER I

### HOW SCENARIO WRITING IS DIFFERENT

It does not seem to occur to the beginner in the art of writing scenarios that there is any difference between an ordinary short story and a scenario story. If any at all, then merely the slight one of writing in the present tense, when he is directing himself to the screen. But in order to prove to you that there is a real and positive distinction between literary and screen story writing, I want to ask you to imagine yourself away back in the early ages of the human race, when language was in its infancy.

Story telling is one of the oldest of the arts. It began, not as an art, but as a pastime, in the days when men, wearied with terrible exertions of the body, sought to repose themselves by reciting tales of what they had been doing. The first stories were tales of battles with wild beasts and with other human foes. We can see, in fancy, an elderly warrior, sitting in front of his hut or tent at evening, with his young warriors about him, describing, in

words helped out by gestures, all the exciting experiences he had been through during the day. Those were days of action, and we may well believe that those tales were not scanted in the way of thrills.

Later on, following the course of man's mental development, came the liking for music, and minstrels sprang into favor. Then, all during the Middle Ages, these gentle bards went from castle to castle, from village to village,

"Singing in the dusk of evening,  
Singing in the dawn of morning,  
Now the tales of oldtime heroes,  
Tales of ages long forgotten."

Language in those early days was made up of simple words; object words, action words, describing words. These are called by us now nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The other parts of speech were added on, as they were needed. But the three primary ones are the bones of all languages. Even without the aid of the others, they are sufficient to present a simple story. To prove this, try telling a tale to a child by the aid of a few dolls. Have in mind a simple little plot, taken from Mother Goose if you like; or from those ever-interesting books, Grimms' fairy tales, or Hans Andersen. Have the dolls act out the plot, using merely your nouns,

verbs, and adjectives as explanation. If very sophisticated, your child may criticise your efforts as bald and infantile, but nevertheless he will understand you. It is probable, though, that he will be pleased, because drama pleases all natural minds. But you must be sure that the picture you are trying to give is plain to yourself, or you will blunder. A good story teller knows that in order to interest he must show to others what he sees clearly in his own mind. He must make pictures out of words, in order to create a vision in the imagination of his hearers.

Now, this is precisely what the writer of the screen story must learn to do. But before he can go to work with anything like a possibility of success, he should get possession of his proper tools; that is, the right words.

Has it ever occurred to you that there are picturizing words; those which have the quality of showing forth, of bringing before your eyes a story? In the simple times of unlettered men, when imagination did almost the whole work of thinking for them, these picturizing words were their only tools. The articles, prepositions, and adverbs were added on as languages grew more elegant and dainty. Emotions, however, expressed themselves from the first, through interjections. *Oh* and *ah* are

the color words of the soul. They cast an outward reflection of what is passing within the heart and mind of men. They are not so much words as instinctive sounds, and stand in a rank by themselves. Remark in passing, that *ah* is the recognizing word; the sound of appreciation, of wonder, of pleasure. *Oh* signifies some sort of repulsion; that is, of mental dissent; or else deep feeling about something already recognized. It is a faint and refined, yet positive distinction, and the dramatic writer cannot afford to ignore even shades of difference between words.

These two word sounds, *ah* and *oh*, may easily be signified on the screen by the form the mouth takes, and, added to appropriate gestures, have eloquence that helps to bring points home.

To return to the significance of primitive words; as experience widened among our ancient forefathers, their story telling passed into more complicated forms of writing and talking; language became more abstract because it dealt with ideas *about* things, and not so much with the things themselves. If you will take a little time to observe a group of children, when they believe themselves unobserved, you will note that so long as they are talking about objects — such as trees, animals, toys — their speech is ready and easy.

But when they touch upon fancies, thoughts, or ideas, then they begin to lose themselves, and have no words for their struggling feelings. But by practice this awkwardness passes away, and soon the child who could not say anything at all about what interested his mind becomes eager to tell you more than you care to listen to. This happens with grown people. Education takes them away from the objective and into the abstract. There are ages of ignorance and then comes an age of knowledge. It always happens that when people have gone far in one direction — when they have been given over to wars, to superstitions, to romance — there comes about a great revulsion, and the pendulum swings about in the exact opposite direction. About a generation ago science was in full career in the civilized world. It ruled everywhere, and had its day. Now people are turning again toward the more natural life; the artistic expression. Color words, long thrust into the background by abstract words, are creeping forth, and skilful writers are adopting them as means of expression for the latest, as it was the first art, picturization.

The screen is the last word in literary art. The screen story has a vocabulary of its own. As yet few people realize this, but the sooner it is gen-

erally realized the sooner we shall have really good screen stories.

If you have a notion that writing a scenario is merely putting your tale into the present tense form, rid your mind quickly of that error. A scenario is a picture story where the plot is unfolded through action of the characters. The actors must be drawn in a certain manner; the whole scene must be presented with a certain art. Once known or understood, it seems simple enough, but one has to learn the art as he would learn any other art.

The first necessity is that you make a strong, vivid picture before your own mental eye of what you are going to try to represent to other people. It must be strong for you or else it will seem hazy to your audience. If your imagination depicts your scene clearly to yourself, it will seem clear and strong to your audience.

I suppose that people differ in scarcely anything so much as in the amount of grasp they have upon ideas. To some people everything is more or less hazy and confused; as the shrewd Sam Weller observed of a stump speaker — “his ideas come out so fast they tumble over each other.”

A person, however, who takes time to clarify for himself the thoughts he wants to utter, will have

the ability to present each one in a distinct and convincing manner; it will "stand out," as an important figure on a good background stands out, and people will remember it after once seeing it. But if you seize a suggestion that comes to you, and start off, all eagerness, like an infant with a new toy, sure that you have a story to tell, it is almost certain that you will, after the first spurt, begin to wander and lose yourself. A story must not only seize the attention of an audience, but hold it, and then satisfy it. Curiosity is to be first aroused, then satisfied. Now, if you do not think out your problems to your own satisfaction first, how will you satisfy your audience?

A marked difference between a literary story and a screen story is that in the first a moral problem may be suggested and left to the imagination of the reader to finish. Some fine tales are constructed in this fashion. But the screen story cannot be a smooth narrative; it must be a succession of starts and thrills. If it runs into smoothness it becomes tedious, and if you go out of your track to show off some little piece of smartness of your own, you spoil your pictured story. A moving picture audience does not care to know the opinion you have about what it is looking at; it is after the development of the plot. So, a scenario may not philoso-

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phize nor drop into poetry, except upon the rare occasions when a line of poetry helps out a pretty scene.

Make this a rule: that in writing screen stories you must resolutely keep egotism out. First, you are to think your characters, and next, of your audience. A story must make a pleasing impression, even if it deals with sad themes, for the test of a scenario is the approval of the audience. No story has more interested old and young than the Greek myths. For instance, the tale of Ulysses saying farewell to Penelope and sailing away on perilous seas to rescue Helen, the stolen queen. And how frequently has the picture of Penelope been reproduced in song and story, as she sat in her lonely palace, directing her spinning maidens, and ravelling out, over and over again by night, the web she spun by day, and dared not complete because of her besieging suitors, who were ever put off until that web should be done! This story has always inspired enthusiasm, the slight touch of sadness not interfering with its intense dramatic interest. All great stories dealing with the primal sources of joy and sorrow in the human race have everlasting appeal.

Our greatest essayist said that nothing should be written with one eye upon the audience, but he

wrote before the day of screen stories. A scenario writer must think of his audience. Whether his aim be to uplift, to please, or merely to amuse, he must never forget that his great object is to interest.

In a screen story you have three things: your place or scenery, your characters who are to live amid these scenes, and your action. Now, the first two are by far the easier to create. You may even imitate things and people you have seen and known. But your plot must be your own. Even if the suggestion for it comes from other sources than your own mind, still the working out of it must be entirely yours. So far as scenes are concerned, you are in a way compelled to describe in your story things that have come before your own eyes. You may have had, on some hurried journey, but hasty glimpses of a mountain, a river, a valley, and yet upon the retina of your eye has been made a quick impression that your memory will reproduce at call. What an everlasting impression is made by the experience of a storm at sea! If you have ever stood upon the deck of a tossing ship, seen upon frightened faces around you the effect of the rolling thunder and lightning's play, that vivid picture will always stay by you. When you describe a storm you will not do it in dead, unmeaning words.

You will picture it as you saw and felt it that awful day. Beautiful episodes that took place amid charming country scenery will repeat themselves for you in picturizing words; the willow tree bending over the water, framing the face of a laughing girl who gazed into its depths — the light clouds that seemed to you then blue as her eyes, the scented breeze that played with her light hair and fanned your own pleasant fancy — have they ever passed from your mind? It is these vivid experiences that we bring to bear upon our description of scenery. Scenes in which we have lived through suffering or joy impress themselves indelibly upon us, and these memories are our storehouse from which we draw at need.

Scenery without figures in it is still life, and tells no story except through suggestion of what might be. Sometimes this faint suggestion may be elaborated into a tale. You place certain images in a framework or set of circumstances and then put them through actions harmonizing with their setting. But all this is mere narrative. The way in which your figures act decides whether they are mere lay figures or characters in a story. If your characters are to become alive, they must reflect your own emotions and impulses. You must live back of them and imbue them with your own vigor.

Once the fire of life has been kindled in them, they will go on and act out their own story in the setting you have given them. But that story will be vivid and real according to the amount of fire you have had in yourself.

It is said that any object that has once been set in motion goes on forever. An impulse has eternal results. Imagine, then, how hard you should labor to give the right impulse, the true direction, to your created characters. What they do must be consistent with the story you have mapped out for them to portray; and not only must their conduct be consistent with your plot, but they must do nothing trivial or silly to mar it. A character is a brain child, and a real author comes to love it and cherish it tenderly. He will no more allow it to commit errors than he would a child of his own flesh and blood. He will give it every advantage to show its abilities, every opportunity to win appreciation and praise. A scenario writer, however, has something else to consider in creating his characters. He must make them possible of representation on the screen. He must not have his characters too subtle or complicated for their nature to be shown by their acts.

A screen character may be shown as sorrowing, remembering the past, anticipating pleasure to come

— imagining — or being moved in the present; but he cannot be represented as carrying on a train of thought. A character in a literary story may be described as doing the most involved thinking. Such writers as George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, have developed many of their characters in this way. But authors possessed of dramatic instinct have always developed their characters more through acts than through words, and shown them moved by feelings rather than directed by reasoning. Charles Dickens's characters were frankly dramatic and all his best works have been dramatized. If you will take the trouble to pick out the stories that have been most popular on the screen — the stories taken from books — you will realize that the authors who wrote those books had some love of the drama and some knowledge of the theatre. Perhaps unaware to themselves they imagined their characters acting out their life drama on the stage.

Now, what these authors did unconsciously the screen story writer must do intentionally. In your visits to moving picture theatres you will certainly be impressed from time to time with the striking features of the actors and actresses. You will observe the manner in which the story acts itself out through them; how they *incline* to their parts.

The impulse will doubtless take hold of you to produce something that is in some degree suited to the actors and actresses you admire. Some one once remarked that every great story or poem that had ever been written had been written with some one person in the mind of the author. It is certainly true of many poets, as is seen in their dedications of the poems to those they loved. Byron, Shelley, and Keats kept in their minds an almost passionate ideal of the real women they described in their poems. It is well known that Shelley worshipped Mary Wollstonecraft and beautifully said in the dedication "To Mary" of the poem "The Revolt of Islam":

"So now my summer's task is ended, Mary,  
And I return to thee, my true heart's home."

If you can be seized with an enthusiasm for a great actor or actress, it may furnish you with a happy impulse for writing a good screen story. You need not hesitate to adapt your story to the character of a star if it seems to you fundamentally fitted to one. But do not distort your story in order to market it. Better leave it as it is, and write another with a fresh impulse. One should not truckle to any market by making caricatures of his inspirations. You will not be likely to do good work if you become a trimmer and trickster. Remember that,

although outside circumstances and outside people may help your story, the true impulse and *motif* of it must come from within.

Looking at the matter from this standpoint will sweep away all temptations to pad out your story and bring in irrelevant incidents merely to make it longer. I once heard a clergyman, speaking on a platform among educators, say that the aim of modern education seemed to be the same as that of horse breeders: to produce an animal that shall be all action before and no tail behind.

This is not a bad suggestion for a screen story writer. A good scenario must certainly be action without any trailing of its interest. There are three things, setting, character, and action; but the greatest of these is action.

## CHAPTER II

### HOW AND WHERE TO GET SCENARIO IDEAS

SCENARIO plots develop from feelings, not from thoughts. The moment something you are witnessing excites you, startles you, provokes sympathy or dislike, you have the germ of a story.

You might go along in the calm path of logical thinking a long time before any stir of sensation would come to you, and it is out of sensation — that warm, quick throb of the nerves which changes us from a state of indifference into one of activity — that ideas are born.

But you may have fine ideas and yet not make a writer. Many a good idea, like many flowers, “are born to blush unseen” and die away without giving pleasure or profit to anybody. The worth of anything depends upon the power to use it. If a blind man were travelling through a valley where gold nuggets lay glittering in the sunshine, all the wealth would be useless to him because he would have neither the sense to see nor the power to appropriate it. But to a keen gold hunter, the single speck of gold dust means splendid things, and the sight of it starts him off on a course of tireless, fruitful labor.

Story germs, like opportunities, lie around us everywhere, but they are valuable only to the agile, adroit mind. Whoever has the creative instinct perceives material where others would see nothing. Visualization is a miracle. It can neither be taught nor learned. It comes to the earnest seeker after truth and beauty, as a reward for his patience and his hard work. Never was there truer saying than that "Inspiration waits upon daily labor," and it is when we have delved hard, and been almost at the point of giving up, that the reward often arrives to make us wild with joy. Then the plodding mind is infused with new energy and purpose, and we feel that we could go on forever without fatigue. But the recruit in the great army of working artists must not wait for this pay day before getting serious about his task. He will need to lay in a considerable fund of faith and hope, in order to go on for as long a time as is necessary before he sees great results. The big world is before him full of stuff for his work. The suggestions for plots are right before him in life and also in literature. From books read and half forgotten, from old tales he heard in childhood, from dreams, from personal experiences, steal forth little fancies that may be turned into valuable plots. Some people will tell you that around news-

paper incidents can be built scenario plots, and that is true under one condition: that the incident you read about stirs so much feeling in you that it starts your fancy to work. Fancy is a fire kindler; it sets the flame of originality alight. When you brace up and resolve to do things all by yourself, and better what you see has been done, then you begin to do original work; and even if the first impulse came from without, to yourself belongs the credit.

But if, on reading a newspaper item, or an article, you say "There's a good idea; I'll try to make a story out of that," in most instances you will find your story dwindle to nothing under your efforts. Now, why is this? It shows that the dramatic impulse, like the poetic impulse, comes from feeling. You can't write a good drama nor a good scenario story in cold blood; or, as one might say, from the outside point of view. A good story comes from the heart of the writer and grows as he feeds it with his own sufferings and joys.

Some wonderfully simple little stories have been received by the world with warm and delighted welcome. Kate Douglas Wiggin's "The 'Birds' Christmas Carol" is a slight thing, but it is founded upon so true a principle that it came to the reading public like a new gospel. It has little plot, yet a

great plot, because from first to last not an iota of power is lost, but every incident and every word develop the *motif* of the story. Get this little book and study its construction, and you will learn how simple the material can be from which real stories are made. The most everyday occurrences may form the basis of plots if they are dealt with in a manner to relate them to human interest. As a general rule, the simpler your plot, the better, provided it is not trivial. Nobody can make a plot out of a mere string of happenings; there must be a meaning to them; a unity which makes each single incident necessary to the rest. The strength of a plot is seen through the characters, and you must throw all your energy and all your feeling into the business of creating them. If you can't take your characters to your heart and make living creatures of them, they will not strike the note of sympathy when they come to stand before your public. So, wherever you may happen to find it or however it comes to you, a true story germ is the idea that thrills you and makes you eager to adopt it. One quality of a true germ is that it persists in intruding itself upon your attention. You may drive it away, but it comes back. It insists upon being dealt with.

Many good ideas come from poems, because into

the best poetry is compressed the very life force of the writers. It is the condensed form of genius. The young writer who feeds himself upon beautiful poetry may possibly develop too much imagination at the expense of his other qualities; an over-active imagination is hurtful to memory, and rather dulls the power of acute reasoning. But, after all, imagination is the divine faculty, and it is better that the literary artist or the dramatist keep plenty of notebooks in which to set down mere facts and episodes that he must recall, and not make himself a storehouse of details. From now on, you should keep several notebooks. Label one "Plot germs," a second, "Happy phrases," a third, "Scenes and Characters." Oliver Wendell Holmes suggested that a writer keep a notebook in which to take notes of himself when he happened to say anything felicitous. The good counsellor did not explain whether it was his custom to retire to a closet, away from society, for a few moments, when he wanted to record some *bon mot* he had flashed forth for the benefit of his friends! One might risk bringing down considerable mirth upon his head if he jerked out his memorandum book at intervals in conversation. But it is true that talk often develops ideas, and one should cultivate the habit of making a private note or so, to keep hold of what may elude

his mind later on when he gets to work. Many a brilliant phrase is lost because the person who uttered it could not recall it in the exact manner he had first given it. Phrase making is a kind of genius; some people are adepts at giving a happy turn to words that constitute in themselves striking titles. But they often go out of one's head as quickly as they came, so it is absolutely necessary to get the habit of making notes of everything which can possibly be turned to good account. One cannot always coin a good title at will. The notebook is an immense help here.

The use of the second notebook is evident, and need not be dwelt upon. Certainly no writer should neglect to keep a record of every interesting person he meets; putting down in a few words his most remarkable characteristics as well as his appearance. And the circumstances under which he was met ought to be noted, too. It is amazing how much we forget in the journey through life, but a scene or a character that has passed into the limbo of forgetfulness may be recalled by a single descriptive sentence. The "Plot germ" notebook is the most valuable of the three, in my opinion. People who have never tried writing often think that to concoct a good plot is a very easy thing; but a little experience ought to break up such an illu-

sion. One of the brightest lights in the moving picture world said not long ago, in a speech to a club, that people generally had about eight really fine ideas for stories in the whole course of their lives, and that if they were wise they would make the best of these! When you set seriously to work, you will possibly find that out of fifty apparently happy ideas, one or two will be of service. So it seems good policy not to let one decent suggestion escape your useful notebook. A moment of writing may save you a great deal of hard thinking later on.

One thing that is essential to a writer of screen stories is to keep up to date. There are fashions in drama; there are waves of preference, and these have to be taken account of and borne in mind by the producer of scenarios. In any profession it is necessary to keep up with what is being done along those lines; but I think that nobody has to be quite so alert and quick to seize the idea of the moment as the scenario writer. You will have to give several hours each week to reading the current moving picture magazines; observing what kind of plays are popular and to finding out by the use of all your wits what is the idol of the hour in the way of *motif*. Sometimes everybody is keen after the heroic; again mere drollery carries the audience away. Melodrama has its day and then the public

wants the variety of historical drama. Producers are alive to these whims, and their aim is to give the public exactly what it wants. You have only to be alive, also, and watch the signs of the times, and you will be able to profit by your vigilance.

Then, by keeping in touch with the work of others you will avoid the trouble of repeating what has already been done. You will not waste time writing exploded ideas. And it often happens that while you are watching a play written by another, the vital spark is kindled in your own mind. This is especially true in moving pictures. When you see a picture put on, you are likely to be at first in a critical mood, and this mood yields to enthusiasm only when something comes on that excites emotion in you. Now feeling and the critical faculty begin to work together, and you ask of yourself — “Is that right? If I had been doing it would I have done it in this way?”

Then, if you can imagine a different way of doing it, you are on the track of another story. Emotion — impulse — energy — they succeed one another. Whatever arouses you begins in you the course of effort which may end in a great success. So attend to your sensations and make capital out of them.

Now, I want to draw your attention to a great

truth. Originality is a variation from the ordinary way of doing things, but originality is not eccentricity; not a wilful departure from custom in order to be singular. True originality has a motive — a logical motive for its basis. Almost any one can think of a thousand whimsicalities which will change a story or a drama. It does not require much talent to turn a beautiful thing into a ridiculous one, and caricaturing is an easy pastime for poor wits. But exercises of this sort are unprofitable and lead nowhere. If you are to gain anything of real value by the study of good plays and screen stories, you must apply yourself to earnestly studying their structure. Take heed of the first striking incident that comes; keep it well in mind throughout the after scenes, and make an effort to recollect the introductions of the characters as they appear. Follow the story carefully through, criticise each succeeding incident, and bring your best judgment to bear upon the most important point: whether the climax of the pictured story proves the point suggested by the first leading incident! This is the test of the plot; whether the author has proved his point.

The thinking process once having been begun in you, fresh ideas that have been inspired by what you have seen will grow into something of real

profit. Originality does not mean that you are to try to do something that no one has ever done before. Even Shakespeare did not attempt it. As is well known, he borrowed many of his plots from old Italian writers, but he infused into their old themes so much fire and freshness that they emerged from the crucible of his mind things of living wonder and beauty.

What matter that the story of Romeo and Juliet, of Othello, of Timon of Athens had been told and retold ages before Shakespeare came to earth! When he told them all again in his own way, from the standpoint of his profound philosophy and marvellous knowledge of human nature, the world listened eagerly and will continue to listen for ages to come. Certain old plays of Corneille and Molière have given the impulse to many modern writers of drama. A generation ago the society plays of Richard Brinsley Sheridan were in great vogue, and theatre-goers found in those pictures of fashionable life the same amusing foibles and follies that characterize modern society comedy. Drama is simply the eternal spirit of life voicing natural emotions. As writers study the best authors, as painters sit at the feet of their masters, so should scenario writers who aim to do good work regard drama as one of the chief sources of their inspiration.

Neglect no opportunity to see a good play whether it is on the speaking stage or in a screen theatre. The way the play is represented will differ through these two mediums, but the *motif* will be unchanged, and it is the *motif* and the way it is wrought out which are to furnish you with your inspiration. The art we love always supplies us with the divine fire for our creative energies. After hearing a fine concert a young musician often goes out filled with fresh and eager ideas. He has heard tones of beauty, and they have thrilled him and started something to work in him that will not be satisfied until he has tried his best — he also — to give forth tones of beauty. Any one who has the dramatic instinct in him can scarcely fail to find even in a poor drama some suggestion that will start his own mind to work. Sometimes skilful authors take a course of reading of sensational novels written by amateurs, simply to get out of the rut of their own thinking and get stirred up through the mental prick of horrific tales. The screen story writer, more than other workers, needs to keep himself constantly in touch with other minds that are working along the same lines.

The first sight of a new play has the same effect upon the mind that the kindling of a match has upon a train of gunpowder. It is a little like the

thrill or shock which sets the mind to working, but it will die out, and if you ever think of it again it will seem trite and old. The good artist knows that first impressions are precious and the suggestions coming from them are material to be cherished and carefully used.

Supposing you have got hold of your first suggestion for a play. The first question you ask yourself is — "How will this naturally work itself out?" Now, the way of its working out will depend largely upon what kind of an idea it is. We will suppose that it is an incident in which two persons are concerned. One has acted and the other has reacted in a situation. Here you have an important suggestion. In every good dramatic story there are action and reaction. In other words, one force pushes and another force hinders. If you think only of one side, the acting side, and go on to make your story, you will not have a dramatic story, but a narrative.

Let us look for a moment at the most wonderful story ever related, that of Adam and Eve in Paradise. Here was a clear, peaceful situation with two acting figures enjoying life. If a story had been written describing the placid course of their existence, how Eve had borne children, loved them and reared them, and how Adam had been happy in this

home life, there would have been a pretty story, but not a drama. The dramatic element was brought in by the opposing force of the satanic influence; the reaction upon the peaceful scene by the serpent enemy. The sudden intrusion of the enemy brings in the element of disturbance, of combat, of drama. This primitive drama has given the impulse to most dramatic stories and poems that have been written down to the present day. "Paradise Lost," "Faust," "Mort d'Arthur"—in fact every story of worth has been founded upon the principle of two opposing forces; good and evil, darkness and light. These two forces live in the unseen world about you. Your skill, even genius, shows itself by the way you seize this principle and work it out in your story. We will suppose that you are concocting a dramatic tale. You lay out your peaceful atmosphere, people it with one or more mortals who are enjoying life. Now suddenly comes in the shattering influence which destroys their peace, brings about a struggle to be ended only with the end of your tale. You must realize that from the first moment you plan your drama this struggle is to be held in your mind. Do not let yourself become so interested in the pleasing part of your story, the good and agreeable characters that you draw, as to forget for a moment

that hovering, destructive influence which must constantly be brought into play.

The destructive influence or the danger element gives what is called "the suspense" of the drama story. No part of your work exacts so much hard thinking as the management of your suspense quantity. You will find it a good exercise as a beginning of dramatic story writing to write up from memory incidents as you recall them from your own experience or from what you have heard of evil forces coming in to destroy happy lives. In everybody's experience there have been countless such happenings. You must learn to look upon your life as a fund in the bank upon which you may draw whenever you need material. The reason why your own life and that of your friends furnishes you with better material than that you may glean from reading books is that what you get in the first way comes to you colored by feeling; just as words have tone colors so memories have colors; joy, grief, hope, hate, love. There has been much talk of inspiration and of thrills. A good deal of nonsense has been talked, but there is no doubt that the best ideas come to the brain through the heart. So learn to feel deeply, to sympathize with life as it is lived around you. This is the first step in the way of getting the true dramatic germ.

## CHAPTER III

### THE THOUGHT BACK OF YOUR STORY

WE now approach the most difficult, but also the most vital part of our subject; that of the story *motif* or underlying idea. So far we have been dealing with things in plain sight; we have been looking at stories acting themselves out in certain ways; but now the questions come — Why these special ways? What makes a story tell itself in one fashion rather than another? And the answering of these questions involves the matter of your own personality.

You have set machinery to work to bring about a certain result, but there was a power back of that machinery which started it to working. The power was the impulse which moved you, yourself; the desire that awoke in your mind to begin a particular story and no other. In every good story, in every good drama there is this power; this upleaping of desire; and it is the important thing. One of the best writers upon the literary art said, "It is not the material, but the instinct to use it in the right way, that makes the Born Talent." But Bulwer Lytton asserted long ago that what most men lack

is not so much talent as the impulse to labor. The inference is that it is a stimulus to do a thing — a devouring, compelling impulse founded upon a desire — which matters to any writer, more even than the possession of the stuff with which to make a story. Why, a really good plot may lie gathering the dust of indolence in somebody's brain for long years, and then, suddenly, the desire wakes in him to *do* something with his material, and he immediately sets to work, all energy and zeal, and turns out a story! The story was nothing at all until, by some intricate process of mental labor, he got all at once the *motif* that changed a dead thing into a live one.

What is true of literary stories applies in this respect to screen stories. Perhaps it is of even more importance here. Sometimes a literary story may pass that is merely pleasing in style and tolerable as to idea. One reader peruses it at a time, and unless it strikes him particularly he rarely talks about it, and so seldom learns what other people think of it. Consequently, if it has served to pass a tedious hour for him he is indulgent toward it. But a screen story is different. Many people witness it together; if it is really fine there is an atmosphere of general approval that at once makes itself felt, in that peculiar little stir of satisfaction which goes

around an audience. On going outside you hear the expression of other people about it, and a much more definite impression is made upon your mind than is made by merely running through a magazine story. If you like it, you are apt to say, "That is a gripping story." It has taken hold of you.

Here is the gist of the thing. It takes hold of you because it contains a vital thought; there is living force back of it, coming from the earnest impulse of the author. Before he wrote it he was himself gripped by an idea that insisted on being expressed, and he passed it on; he became the medium of a thought that is in some way related to the common brotherhood of man, and they recognize it. As the usual phrase runs, "It has appeal."

Every great story or play has an appeal. If it is a wide appeal, so much the better. If it deals with a question that concerns humanity in general, it may become one of those things which at intervals sweep through the world and carry people away in a whirl of enthusiasm. "Intolerance" was such a story. The idea was so big here that only a master mind could have completely carried it out, and excellent work as the author did in it, no doubt a Shakespeare could have done better. But for quite a long time "Intolerance" was the play of the period, and no one dared be so out of date as not to

go to see it. Great pains were taken with its production and no expense was spared in scenic effect. Three years ago the first thing that greeted a new arrival in Hollywood, California, was the great field where "Intolerance" had been shot, and the gigantic wooden elephants towering over the walls of the ancient temples were a fearsome sight. Now, merely a few rags flutter about in the breeze where formerly were tents and walls, and the sight-seer smiles and turns away his eyes from the aftermath of the great picture play. But the *idea* beneath that play is eternal, and so long as men worship freedom and loathe tyranny, even the recollection of it will stir their hearts. This is an instance of a world-wide appeal. Themes of patriotism, of humanity, of revolt against false religions or against cruelty in any form, are generally appealing themes.

Not everybody can handle a problem theme. And if he bungles it, if he lets it get away from him, he makes a wretched muddle, indeed. An idea that is too big for one's powers — too exacting for his limited experience — is about as difficult as it is for a small child to lead a powerful mastiff on a weak string. Better do what you can do well at first, and give your talent time to grow toward the greater effort. Many writers get discouraged be-

cause they are over-ambitious in choosing their themes.

However, there are thousands of problems that are not unmanageable; that touch upon facts of common interest. Problems teem all about us; life is full of them. To ignore their call would be stupid. Therefore, you want to educate yourself to deal with them. Begin modestly, but you need not have a modest ideal; all the time you are doing what you can do now, you can keep your greater ideal before you to work toward. Before you undertake to grapple with questions of national importance, experiment with things that concern the more simple relations of human and family life. Go to the old stories, the legends and fairy tales, for suggestions. And also go to the Bible.

It used to be said that the Bible was the great armory where people who wanted to fight found their weapons. The Book of Proverbs has truly furnished countless weapons for combat between people who cannot see a thing from the same point of view. But so have the classics; so, too, have all manners and sorts of philosophy. In fact, wherever there is subject matter for clashes of opinion, there is subject matter for a story *motif*.

Take the proverb, "A virtuous wife is far above rubies." How many stories have been woven about

it! Womanly virtue and innocence have furnished the themes for many beautiful legends and poems. Every one instantly recalls "Una and the Lion," in this connection. And when the virtue of patience is thought of, who does not immediately think of the patient Griselda? She is not a popular heroine in the twentieth century; but she had her day, and countless plots have been woven around the universally accepted idea that womanly virtue is the foundation of home and a nation's security.

The author with convictions cannot always hope to escape criticism from some people; he need not expect to please everybody. He will do well to be honest with himself and with his subject, for if he trims to suit other people he will be seen through, and it is queer but true that few things make the public more irritated than to realize that it has been pampered and treated like a baby, by being given sugar plums instead of solid food. George Sand said, in her novel "Consuelo," that the public is a good judge of values, and once having seen anything really superior it insists upon having things as good afterwards, and will not be satisfied with inferior things. So we have this as an incentive to do our best at all times.

Another reason for writing up and not down is that he who runs after popularity is likely to ride

to a fall because popularity is a very variable quantity. It is strange but certain that no one can put his finger on the pulse of the public for any length of time. What is disliked today may be in full favor tomorrow. There is but one thing which is eternally appealing, and that is — absolute, unadulterated goodness. Avoid the goody-goody, but do try to cultivate in yourself the honest, the human point of view. If you descend low enough to cater to the rougher impulses of human nature you will soon have the mortification of dropping out. Decency, uprightness, are permanent things; evils of all sorts and degrees are temporary. It is even politic to aim high. The public appreciates the compliment of being taken seriously, and being treated as if it held opinions that are correct and standards that are lofty.

Story *motifs* that relate to human relations lie all around us. From the most ancient times they have been freely used by dramatists. Upon the idea of ingratitude old Solomon gave one of his most convincing discourses; Shakespeare produced the great play of "King Lear"; Balzac made a wonderful dramatic novel, with "Père Goriot" as the martyred parent. With jealousy for the theme "Othello" was given to the world. "A Midsummer-Night's Dream" exquisitely portrays wom-

an's capacity to idealize the one she loves. Could there be a more potent description of sentimentality than the lines, —

“Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,  
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,  
And stick musk roses in thy sleek, smooth head,  
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.”

It was a daring, an extraordinary conception, this of Titania in love with the ass, but it proved the genius of its originator. For four centuries it has been the very model classic for the fanaticism of love.

Fairy stories seem but slight things to the superficial mind. But to the student they show profound insight into human nature. All folklore repeats national experiences and beliefs. Read Grimms' "Household Tales," and Hans Andersen, as well as the classical legends, if you would discover good material for story *motifs*. But do not imagine that by merely taking a good idea and creating characters to act and react upon one another that you are producing a drama.

A story is a thing in three parts; a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Life furnishes us with the beginning and the middle, but life does not end. It goes on from one generation to another, weaving itself in and out, mingling stories and in a way

bringing about confusion between them. Art supplies the end of the story. A writer takes the material life furnishes and makes a story by setting his imagination at work to supply a logical, satisfactory ending. It is plain, then, that the chief thing in an imaginary story is its ending. Your inspiration or big thought may suggest a certain story to you, but unless you see your way clear to the finish — unless the finish seems the important thing — the story is incomplete and worthless. The trouble with most stories is that they are trivial. They lack substance; they are merely masses of incident thrown together. A dramatic story which is trivial becomes farce in the acting. The one thing that lifts a story above the commonplace is the thought or *motif* back of it; the inspiration the author had in writing it out. A good actor searches his copy to find out the *motif* of the author so that he may interpret it to the audience. It ought to be so plain that it will thrill and stir him, so that he may in turn thrill the audience.

We cannot make anything plain to others until it is plain to ourselves. So first of all get a good grasp upon your *motif* or else your characters will do things contrary to your intention. As you write stop often and ask yourself, "Is this consistent

with the end I had in view? Does this help to prove my point?" If not, cut it out.

It is well that a *motif* should strike the note of the age you are living in. People like to hear talk of the subject that interests the world at the moment. When some great reform is being agitated a wave of interest quivers through the atmosphere and any story or drama that touches upon that topic is eagerly listened to. Jean Webster's "Daddy Long Legs," sweet and dainty as it was, might not have been such a tremendous success had it not come out at the moment when the reform of orphan asylums was being agitated. Injustice to children and to wrongdoers has always been a vital topic, but occasionally it flames out before the public mind when some eloquent speaker voices a new personal experience; as did Thomas Mott Osborne a few years ago.

But there is even a greater gift than to catch the bird of public opinion on the wing as it flies past — and that is seeing it from afar, before it fairly appears within the range of general vision. "The spirit of expectancy," says Wyche, "is the creative spirit." We must all be seers. It is through the creative imagination that we perceive the ideal and come into consciousness of our kinship to the divine.

There is always what is called a psychological moment for a story *motif* to be launched: and the happy moment is when the topic it deals with is "simmering" in the minds of intelligent people. Happy the writer who has the prophetic grasp upon a world problem! If you can get a hold upon anything, great or little, that is still in the depths and bring it to the surface, you are indeed in luck. Dickens was just enough and not too much in advance of his age when he was inspired to give the world "Oliver Twist." Much of the character drawing in this book is wretched. Its love scenes are full of mawkish sentimentality, and where it deals with domestic circumstances it is absolutely untrue to life. But the vivid pictures of Sikes and Fagin the Jew were the work of a divine genius. Dickens was one of the few world reformers who possessed the dramatic instinct to such an extent that he was able to make his characters live out his ideal.

There is absolute necessity for a purpose in a screen story which aims to live more than a day. Your purpose need not be moral, but neither should it be unmoral; that is, you need not aim to press home any particular point, but you should touch upon some idea or feeling that concerns all human nature.

Now, your purpose or *motif* is the thing you have set your heart upon saying. You cannot afford to let go of it or it will elude you. It is well, before you begin to write out your story, to write out your purpose or *motif* in ten or a dozen words and keep it in plain sight all the time you are doing your work.

Frederic Taber Cooper remarked: "One thing is certain: the central idea will not come at command. It must be patiently looked for, watched for, struggled for; it usually represents a good deal of hard work and a good deal of discouragement."

Some writers often get their inspiration for a *motif* from titles of other stories and books. A title may suggest one side of a subject to one author and leave untouched other sides that may be plain as day to a mind differently constituted. The disposition of your mind, your temperament, will have much to do with your choice of subject. Poe, the melancholy and introspective, invariably had a psychological *motif* for his tales. It may be remarked, in passing, that Poe was a very obscure man of letters, neglected by the world until he produced his poem "The Raven."

Unless you are driven by your genius do not select a psychological *motif* for your first stories. Search rather for cheerful, pleasing subjects. Put yourself in the way of cheerful experiences. Some

young writers think they must cultivate gloom, but I should rather advise you to cultivate joy. In this day and generation especially, joy is the torch bearer for the world.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PLOT

THE photoplay plot is founded upon the idea of struggle. Please reflect upon this. You are not to write a fictitious history of individuals, giving the details of their career, from the cradle to the grave, as the older novelists were wont to do; nor even to achieve a short narrative containing some exciting incidents, involving a hero and a heroine. You might put both of them through the most astonishing stunts, and not have anything like a plot. But when you imagine for your pair of lovers either circumstances or a human enemy opposing their happiness, and go on to show how they managed to marry and be happy despite everything; or else how things were too much for them, and they were defeated in the end — then, you weave a plot, and are on the way to make a photoplay story. There must be struggle and a triumph of some kind.

In the early days of the screen story there was very crude work in picturizing, and the story was founded upon the idea of physical struggle; fights, murders, rough-and-tumble, prowling beasts, forest fires — everything elemental and fierce that

could be depicted. But the mechanics of the motion picture industry have wonderfully improved, and it is realized more and more that the screen can lend itself to fine and dainty work. The day will come when nothing will be too delicate or subtle to be shown in pictures; neither the deepest emotions nor the most complicated actions; immense progress has been made in the past two years, and big strides are being taken now every day. At present stories are shown that deal largely with that moral struggle which is inevitable to life; the strife of brute forces is tacitly falling to the field of low comedy, and used in helping out strong melodrama. The better plays are based upon the suggestion of moral struggle, and they are becoming as popular as the rougher plays used to be.

All human lives are made up of struggle against circumstances. Few people have actual enemies who try to wrest from them the fruit of their labors or rob them of what they love best. But everybody has to fight something; even if it be only what is called fate. The greatest French dramatists have dealt much with this idea of fate; with the Germans it was a tempting theme, and they wrought it out in its more morbid aspects. Shakespeare, who was influenced by the Italians, used it in the play of "Hamlet"; and in our own times Stevenson and

Poe have exploited it, the first in the famous "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," which not long ago was sweeping the country as a screen play. It is a blood-curdling play, showing in the most powerful manner the strife between the good and evil sides of man's nature.

Another type of struggle is that of man against the forces of nature; pioneers battling their way through forests, miners obstinately delving in the stubborn earth, and discoverers of every kind. In every book, in every drama, is a hint of life's great conflict, and it must be the aim of every scenario writer to bring out clearly this fundamental idea of a life's story. A mere recital of events — a chain of incidents — does not constitute a plot; the struggle must be present, and when the struggle is ended the story is done.

The first essence of a scenario plot is that it must be simple. Robert Louis Stevenson said that the great excellence of all the best work lies in its simplicity. The author who wishes to give earnest attention to this matter should read Poe's essay on the "Philosophy of Composition." There is a good deal of literature on the art of short story writing; almost nothing on the art of scenario; but the same general rule of plot construction applies equally to the short story and the scenario;

namely, that it should begin with a striking incident, called a crisis, and lead on through a series of consecutive incidents to a dramatic conclusion, or climax. Distinguish between the crisis, which is the exciting of the interest of your audience, and the climax, which is the satisfying of their aroused curiosity. What is known as the *dénouement* is simply the final situation, shown in the literary story by a few words, a slight explanation, and in the screen story by the flashing on of a picture which exhibits the hero and heroine in the aspect which proves the whole point of the story; whether it be tragic or of the comedy or melodrama order.

Plot construction is the most important thing about writing. An acquaintance with the best literature in his particular line is essential to an author, who ought to be familiar with the classics as well as with the fiction of his own day. It is also well to study the methods of those who have successfully wrought. Read the "Confessions" of various well-known authors who are tempted to give them to the public, and learn from these what to avoid and what to practise. But although it is a good thing to study other people's methods, practice is, after all, the only way in which to learn to become an expert in your art. One of the best exercises for a young writer is to

analyze the plots of good novels. Digging the heart out of a story, pulling it to pieces, is not as easy as the child's game of picking a flower to pieces to pry into its secrets. It is a task difficult enough to try the calibre of the stoutest courage, but it pays well in the end. You might begin by analyzing a short story after this fashion:

"A Romance of Billy Goat Hill," by Alice Hegan Rice, is a simple modern story known to almost everybody. You can get it from any library. Read it over carefully, have your notebook ready, and begin to search for the following items: First, what was the purpose of the author or the point she wished to prove in writing her story. It is clearly disclosed by an exclamation of the author brought in as a comment in a certain situation, "Oh, the promises made for a day and kept through the years! What a lot of tangled lives they have to answer for!" Once you have seized this point the way in which the story is unfolded has a distinct meaning for you. You divine at once that if there is to be a happy ending a price must be paid for it. But the character of the story is not tragic; it is bright and consistently cheerful. So, even if the promise involves suffering, a rescue of the hero and heroine will somehow be wrought out. Note down the climax: that a dumb boy almost miraculously

recovers speech in time to testify and free the accused man. The plot is simple: a fight at cards between two drunkards; an innocent third implicated, and the suspense element of his trial. The character drawing has a great deal to do with the value of the story. The plot runs a little to melodrama, but is interesting and clever. You have noted that the three points are: first, to find the *motif* of the author; second, to recognize the climax and mark step by step the incidents that have been gathered together to lead up to the climax; third, to criticise the characters with the view of discovering whether they are well related to the plot.

You may follow out this same process of analysis with any story. Another plan is to analyze stories you have witnessed on the screen. Such a story as "The Sporting Duchess" is simple and strong enough to give you good points. The *motif* here is plainly that honest love will find its way out through any net that villainy spreads for it. The climax is the triumph of the Duchess when Clipston, the horse, wins the race for her. There is great suspense element in the plot, as the villain seems constantly on the point of coming out ahead. The character of Lord Desbrow, a clean, honest, simple Englishman, keeps the human interest strong and well to the fore. The plot is simple, and while there

is constant action there are no complications. All this makes it a good model plot to study.

You will have found out by now the truth of Poe's suggestion that a good story should begin with the end and work forward to the beginning. This rule relates to the planning of your story. Before beginning the actual writing you should lay out a clear, brief plan. Make an outline of your plot in a couple of hundred words, putting your strength upon the climax or ending. Whatever weakness there is let it fall in the middle of your story, for the beginning must be interesting and the climax strong. The difference between a mere sketch and a story is that in the latter something actually happens. Outline your plot, then, not as a narrative or a sketch, but as a brief description of an action. Memorize this little outline and carry it with you constantly day and night. Let it stay in the depths of your mind even when you are thinking about other things. Relate it to everything interesting that you see or that happens to you. This plot germ of yours should be like an octopus that gathers in from the outside every succulent thing that floats within its grasp. Your own mind furnishes the inspiration, but the outside world furnishes the material out of which to develop your idea.

In the screen story we have just been speaking of, "The Sporting Duchess," the plot is usually called one of heart interest. Stories touching upon love, family affection, devotion, and sacrifice are all heart interest stories. The triangle story, or jealousy in love, is at the foundation of nearly all melodrama. It is a mine that has often been badly worked. The crudest, most sensational sort of stuff has been produced by amateur writers with jealousy as the theme. For the superficial writer this plot is a dangerous one to handle. You should know a great deal of human nature and have had considerable experience of life before you try to write melodrama. The young writer here makes his great mistake; in taking love and jealousy as his theme. He sometimes gets it over by throwing in a great deal of picturesque action, but it is stuff that will not stand the test of criticism and consequently lasts but for a day. Good work must be sound all the way through, and you must aim to have a logical plot founded upon some true principle of human nature and true to life.

The domestic plot, usually a story of young married life, or of a father and daughter, mother and son, or sisters and brothers, separated and brought together, may make the substance of interesting and pleasing stories. The photoplay "Stepping

Out" is an excellent instance of what may be done with simple material in this line. In such a story as this the characters are of great importance, and the situations must be wrought out with the utmost skill because the interest lies not so much in intensity as in the satisfaction provoked by each incident in turn.

If you have a natural turn for humor the way before you is easy. Humorous stories are eagerly sought for by scenario editors and welcomed with avidity by the audience. What is known as "slapstick comedy" is now usually studio work, and the stories are often written by the stars themselves to suit their own particular gifts. Here plot is at a discount and the whole interest is in the piling up of amusing and commonly monstrous situations. There is one trouble; audiences have now grown so exacting that nothing can satisfy them. Each day they look for something more extraordinary, and it is rather the business of the star than the screen story writer to aim toward productions of this nature.

But there is another comedy of a more refined sort which demands a humorous turn of mind united with considerable art. The Drew comedies are instances. They are always looked forward to when announced on the programme and almost in-

variably enjoyed by the audience. They do not tax the attention of wearied minds as strong melodrama sometimes does; consequently their appeal is as great to men as it is to women. The writing of these playful little comedies is pretty work, but the market for them is limited and there are few stars in this line and they often write their own stories.

There is now left but one plot; that of the emotional drama. This is deeper than the heart interest story, insomuch as it deals with the profounder passions of the human heart. The rôle of the star is the most vital thing in a drama of this description. Nazimova plays in emotional rôles and makes everything subordinate to her part. In watching her magnificent acting one forgets the story.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PLOT (*concluded*)

THE historical play seems to offer fascinating vistas to the young writer, as it gives him a background all prepared, a certain outline of plot, and strongly outlined characters. He has knowledge enough of his facts to equip him, and he imagines that with all these data he is prepared to start off on a course of successful historic drama.

But this is an error. Knowledge of history is essential, of course, but far more than the possession of data is needed. Historical drama should have the element of greatness in it, else it lapses into the merely trivial. An author who takes it as his field must have a deep acquaintance with human nature and an understanding of the ways in which Nature has worked out her plans through the medium of the races of men.

The writer of historical plays should know something of psychology and much of sociology; moreover, to knowledge he must add the gift of a penetrating sympathy with his fellow-men and the prescience which can relate the future to the past. Every one is familiar with the saying, "History

repeats itself." But few of us have ever pondered upon the problem of the recurrence in the world of certain types of catastrophe and of prosperity among nations. Why did Rome fall at the moment of her proudest triumph? Why did the Greeks, having reached almost the apex of refinement of the artistic sense, become transformed into a race of weaklings and sensualists, and show effeminacy in war? Why did the Basques become distinguished above the greater race with which they mingled? Why — but scores of questions suggest themselves to the thoughtful mind, and unless they can be answered intelligently, no writer dare consider himself equipped with the sort of brain which can undertake the writing of history.

The chronicler of dead-and-gone facts is a mere tyro in the art of dramatic writing. The faculty of "relationing" — of twisting a glittering chain of illuminating events into a convincing conclusion — is the mark of a genius of this order. Compare the triteness of such an historian as Robertson with the vivid imagery of Froissart or Green. Nearly every one is familiar with Green's "History of the English People," a delightful narrative which breathes the very spirit of life into personages of long ago. Instead of bringing before us the stony profiles carved on coffin lids, he presents to us a

wonderful procession of interesting figures, kings, queens, statesmen, knights and ladies, gay and gorgeous or solemn and hypocritical, but never inanimate or mechanical. A woman historian of the Victorian age, narrow and bigoted as she was, had the charm of style, the sympathy with her characters which made one overlook her many faults as to accuracy, and read her historical narratives with pleasure and profit. I allude to Charlotte M. Yonge, now almost forgotten, but who was greatly esteemed in her age as a wonder of learning and a delightful author. Her tales, "The Little Duke," "A Chaplet of Pearls," and even "The Heir of Redclyffe" (absurd in its sentimentality, but excellent in its atmosphere), might give several valuable suggestions to the young writer who is ambitious of acquiring the secrets of historical presentation.

The writer with the true instinct for historic drama has the gift of seizing the inner meaning of his subject and presenting it to the world of his readers in terms of the present day. The ability to re-create the scenes of the past is nothing unless it is united with the power to project one's self into the spirit of those who lived in olden times. Swinnerton said that a great creative artist must possess a passionate understanding of the soul of

man. This sounds formidable, but few among us dare pride ourselves upon even having the ambition to become great artists. We humbly hope to do creditable work. So we may consider cheerfully that, after all, "passionate understanding" is little more than deep, broad sympathy, and many of us either possess or can cultivate that. It grows with cultivation, for moods are all more or less habits, and if we practise the habit of sympathizing with woes and joys of our fellows we rapidly arrive at an understanding of them. For true insight into human nature many an unlettered old country woman with a feeling heart may rival a learned philosopher. George Eliot knew this and proved it in her stories of English country life. If you are planning historical stories of an epoch in the near-by past, visit rural districts and win your way into the hearts of the "oldest inhabitants," and get them on their hobbies of reminiscence. To learn you must become a good listener, for material gained in this way is worth more than that which you get from mere reading. To write historical stuff you positively must know how to draw character. In the true historical drama the character is the chief factor. The story centres about some towering figure, a Washington, a Lincoln, a Napoleon, a Richard the Third, a Queen Elizabeth,

or even a Puritan woman. How profoundly Hawthorne had penetrated into the bitter secrets of the human heart before he wrote "The Scarlet Letter"! And the gifted author of "Romola" said that the book was begun when she was a young woman and it left her an old one, so thoroughly did she identify herself with her subject.

Not only are understanding and sympathy essential to good historical drama, but the screen story writer must, in addition, have the adroitness to write to some extent around prominent stars. Not every actor can portray characters with whom all the world is familiar and that will be sharply criticised from the standpoint of accuracy. On the whole, it is a difficult part of the art and had best be left to the expert.

Race problems and religious problems are also themes beset by obstacles and had better be conspicuous by their absence. If you are interested in local or national politics, you have sometimes a ready-made topic which will start you off on a story. Suffrage and prohibition are rather exhausted as topics; still, a new twist given to an old subject may redeem it from its triteness. Some producing companies refuse to have anything to do with propaganda stories, and although if you have the instinct of the reformer nothing will stop you, I merely

drop here the word of advice that the story for the story's sake has the fairer prospect.

If you happen to be deeply interested in any social problem, take your interest as a "lead" and get to work upon that subject. You will do your best work when stirred by enthusiasm and along the lines where your interest lies. Local environment will unconsciously influence you in your choice of a subject. If you happen to be brought into contact with social workers, the tenement-house problem will appeal to you; association with hospital workers and teachers will incite your sympathy in their dilemmas and trials and you will then write from the inside.

But if you are dealing with much-worked topics you must bring out some unusual aspect of your subject. Put freshness into an old theme, create novel situations and make your characters very much alive. Make an effort to get out of the rut and seek unploughed fields. Even if you should happen to live in a dull country place there is no reason for you to be discouraged over finding material for your plots. No spot is dull to the person who has acute perceptions. The very forest birds sing their songs of primeval life; the seashore contains a thousand suggestions; the tops of mountains have an inspiration that may lift the

fancy into delightful realms. A new atmosphere is a fertile source of plots, and musing upon the present aspect of the land is likely to turn your thoughts toward the past, and arouse in you desires to make empty places live again as they lived in the days gone by. How many stories of the Wild West have grown out of an adventure of some lonely traveller in deserted lands! A day spent in a "jumping-off place" may be the very spur to novel effort, and the writer must ever be ready to sacrifice comfort, convenience, and conventions to the possibility of getting hold of good material. Suppose you have to lie by some day, when a train accident has delayed your journey and given you hours that you scarcely know how to fill; you need not regard that as lost time nor repine over a fruitless period. Perhaps fate gave into your hands a queer chance; profit by it. The most barren-seeming spot may hide treasures of plot. The brilliant author of "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch" told me that she was not looking for this story when it chanced to come to her through a sight of an old field which lay near her residence, a sort of eye-sore to the neighborhood and without interest for any human being, until her genius seized an occult association and brought a wonderful little tale to the light. Mary E. Wilkins, as is

well known, drew her plots from the most quiet and monotonous village existence. As I said at the beginning of this chapter it is not the material, but the power to use it in the right way, that proves your possession of talent.

The divorce problem has always been, and will always be, a deeply interesting topic for discussion. It has so many complications, it admits of so many points of view. Most of the divorce plots have been worn threadbare, but if you can work out an original conception or turn an old situation into novel ones, you may produce some very successful stuff. But the topic demands delicate handling and the right point of view. If you are a heretic, if you have original theories to advance, and wish to propose some sort of reforms that will certainly excite controversy, I should advise your not putting them into a screen story; at least, before your reputation enables you to put over whatever you choose. The beginner must tread the beaten path for a while; he is not permitted to take canters into risky fields. So divorce, again, is not the very best plot idea for you to begin with.

One thing must be carefully considered, the advisability of the happy ending. Tragedy is the finest product of the human mind. It stands above all other forms of writing as the highly polished

diamond does above other stones. Only the writer of ripened powers and deep life experience should undertake the tragic plot. The novice is usually tempted to try his hand at it, just as the young actor is irresistibly led toward emotional drama, even if he has a natural bent toward comedy. He yearns after the dignity of the thing. Nobody should absolutely control his natural bias, and if you are impelled toward tragedy, Heaven direct you and success be with you! But the need of the happy ending will be evident to you if you will study the weary, discouraged faces of the passing crowd. People go to the moving picture theatre to be distracted from their troubles and diverted from their gloom. They need to be brightened and cheered, and made to feel that, after all, there is something good, bright, and hopeful about life. So if you can produce a story that makes people happier and better you will have supplied a real need.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHARACTERS

THE chapter on characters naturally falls into two parts and may be dealt with under two heads. We will consider first the character as your brain creation. It is very fascinating work — this of bringing forth from the void a living, breathing creature imbued with your own life and spirit. For do what you will to make your characters things apart and outside of yourself, they will persist in drawing the very essence of their being from their author.

Jean Paul wrote this: "The character must appear living before you, and you must hear it, not merely see it; it must, as takes place in dreams, dictate to you, not you to it. A poet who must reflect whether, in a given case, he will make his character say yes or no, to the devil with him!" Now, this is all very well as far as it goes, but the author who is going to permit his character to take absolute possession of him in this manner must have a strong, clearly outlined plot into which these privileged characters slip deftly and easily to their proper niches; or else they will become like

a team of unbroken colts and snatch the reins out of his hands.

The first essential of a character is that he should become alive and be recognized as an individual, but the second thing is that he should never be allowed to do anything that is inconsistent with your plot. A character is a representative sent to Congress — if we may use the metaphor — to stand for certain wants and ideas of his constituency. Call your story Congress and then you will see you are the elector of this representative — character — and that he is bound to act in your interest. He is not selfishly to take his own head and do things that might turn your plot upside down. Real people are complex and inconsistent, but characters must be logical and simple.

In the screen story simplicity — that is, direct, firm purpose — is the prime necessity for a character. You will realize this when you remember that he is to show himself forth; that is his aim — clear self-portrayal. It often happens that a writer sees his character in his mind so clearly that he fancies the figure which is so vivid to himself must be equally apparent to his readers. If you would avoid this fault describe your character for yourself in a few strong, colorful words. Sketch him in when he first appears before you. Describe his physical

appearance and give him personality. When you come to set him into your play he may become a type, but for you he must be from the first an individual. Visualize the dress of your characters; their attitude and bearing. Throw yourself into their natures enough to see things through their eyes. Let them hear, feel, and see. But at the same time you should keep in mind that whatever they do must harmonize with the *motif* of your story.

Authors are apt to excel either in plot or in character drawing, but the screen story writer must be good in both. The scenario editor and director can do nothing with flimsy, weak characters, nor is it their part to imbue your manikins with life. You must draw your own heroes and heroines so finely that they will at once seem like living people to the scenario editor. In order to do this you should study real life, but not neglect the study of good literature. Go to Dickens for good character drawing of common people, go to Thackeray for wonderful portraits of society people. "Vanity Fair," "The Newcomes," and "Pendennis" are mines of wealth to the writer of the comedy drama. It is one thing to plagiarize and another thing to borrow. All young writers are obliged to borrow until they have achieved such a

full experience that they can originate. Study of good literature should not interfere with a keen and constant study of life. A good dramatist must study "all sorts and conditions of men." He should make free use of his notebooks and jot down traits and habits of people he meets as well as odd incidents in which they are concerned. This will help him to realize their weak and strong points and to understand how they will naturally act under given circumstances. When you create your characters you should be able to make them show what they are by the little things they do. Then your audience will understand them. A character's function is an immense one because his acts must fill in gaps left in a screen story that do not appear in a literary story where word description is permitted. The first appearance your characters make in your story must give a strong impression. Their first acts stamp them with their type in the eyes of the audience, and you must always make it plain to your audience what type your various characters are. The old play writers, Molière and Sheridan, always brought their characters on the stage in their atmosphere. The dude was instantly recognizable, the society woman could not be mistaken for anything else, the musician as truly had his personal stamp as the bailiff, the pot boy, and

the coachman. The audience will expect from a character thereafter about the same sort of action which he performs at first. Sudden and radical changes of character — reformation of an evil nature — may take place on the screen, but unless handled with great artistry these transformations are awkward and unnatural. The slow development of character, such as is shown in novels of the kind called epic novels, is not at present possible on the screen. On the contrary, a certain abruptness is attractive. Your atmosphere may be mellow, but your characters must be sudden and swift in action. As they come and go they should always carry a little piece of the story with them.

The object of the screen character is to develop your story *motif*, and so a great many sides of his nature which it would be logical to reveal in a literary story are here necessarily kept in the background. You must not be subtle, but rather bold and dashing in your delineation of your story characters. Review the list of your acquaintances with the aim of making them useful as material. Close your eyes to all their minor traits and fix your mind firmly upon the salient points which make them differ from the rest of mankind. It is only to the superficial observer that all people seem alike. De Maupassant, who was almost a fanatical ob-

server of details, said that a literary artist should look at a horse long and closely enough to realize that he was different from every other horse in the world. Scientists tell us that no two leaves on all the trees are alike. It is incredible but true that no two ripples on the surface of the waters take precisely the same turn as they wave away toward the line of eternity. In families no two members duplicate one another. Some sentimental old writers were fond of depicting twin brothers or sisters as alike as two peas in a pod. Thackeray, on the contrary, in "The Virginians," made his twin brothers, George and Harry, strikingly different in looks and nature. If twins are unlike it is a conclusive argument that the generality of people only resemble one another superficially. It is the business of the writer to distinguish differences between people. It will help you to do this if you make even a slight study of psychology. A very good little book has been written by Compayré and it is obtainable in most public libraries. Read carefully through either this or some other similar book in order to get an understanding of how mind acts and how the emotions affect character. Then apply your knowledge constantly to individual cases. Ask yourself of this person or of that one, "What strong trait adheres in his nature even through all

the variations of his conduct? Does he seem to be chiefly guided by affection, ambition, greed, selfishness, humane impulses, love of children, egotism, or is he under the dominion of shyness or vanity?" When you have convinced yourself that the person you are studying is moved by a certain impulse, you will be able to define pretty accurately what his conduct under given circumstances is likely to be.

Every device by which you can get into greater intimacy with your characters is useful. Do not shirk work nor imagine that a few slight efforts will turn out finished creations. Very few authors can depict a character in a few broad, bold strokes. Most of us have to sketch and alter and retouch many times before we produce something that will bear the test of criticism. Personally, I have found it useful to choose some picture that is similar to the idea I have in mind and work from that. Before planting your character in your big story, experiment with him, write out little incidents that seem to fit him. In fact make him act to see what stuff he is made of. When the moment comes for your character to make his *début* before your audience, give him as favorable a setting as possible. The circumstances with which he is surrounded will have a great deal to do with the impression

he makes upon the audience. Manage your environment so as to suggest just as much as you wish to indicate at the moment of his entrance upon the stage and no more. Contrive to hint at what he is likely to do, but do not fully reveal it. The first appearance of your hero or heroine should start the great suspense movement which is the vital part of your story.

You have, of course, experienced the little impatience which stirs in an audience, witnessing a strong play for the first time, at the appearance one after another of the minor characters. As each one comes there is the expectant, the eager little scrutiny, the question, "Is it he? Is it she?" and then the satisfaction and applause which greet the appearance of the real star. So reserve for your star the most interesting part of your stage setting. The analogy of star with the constellation in the firmament is no idle one. It means that the leading character in a play should really shine above the rest. For your star should be reserved all the most striking situations and the finest speeches. Other characters come and go merely to help out; in a screen story the star is really the whole show.

One difference between the writer of the literary story and the screen story is that the latter can never for a moment lose sight of the result, the

effect that is to be produced. In order to realize something of the effect the characters you have created is likely to produce on others, study the effect that characters you read about make upon yourself. A few characters in literature stand out boldly and make a single effect, like Othello, Richard the Third, Jean Valjean; while others produce a mixed effect as Becky Sharp, Lady Dedlock, or Pendennis. The tendency of modern drama is toward these single effects in characters, and the writer of screen stories must even more than the dramatist aim toward this. In fact, the simpler, almost childlike characters have made the greatest "hits." What is there in the play "Pollyanna" except the idea of "always being glad"? And yet that little play has swept critical audiences off their feet and won acclaim from world-worn men and women. Look upon your story for a moment as a piece of tapestry and aim to weave through the mesh of your threads one or two vivid figures around which are grouped minor ones in attitudes that serve to show off the beauty of the central personages. So must you aim to place the characters in your screen story as objects of intense interest thrown into relief by their surrounding attendants. Your star should be always in high light so far as the interest of the audience is con-

cerned. So even when they are out of sight they must never be out of mind.

Now, all this effect is not easy to produce. It is the result of assiduous work, of careful study of detail as well as of good judgment regarding the final result. One suggestion which will prevent monotony is this: if you employ ordinary types of characters in a story your conditions should be unusual while extraordinary types of characters may have ordinary conditions. This does not refer to the plot interest, for, of course, that must be strong under all circumstances; it refers to the placing of your characters. Whatever rôle you elect for your character let him keep strictly to that rôle. If his prevailing trait is tenderness, do not let him perform some act that is brusque, abrupt, or ridiculous. If it is conveyed to the audience that he has a sense of humor manage so that in circumstances likely to give that humor play he shows the trait that is expected of him. He must be true to type. Your miser must always be a miser, your egotist be continually wrapped up in himself, your shallow little girl always stupid and inane. In real life a trained parrot may utter Greek phrases, but on the screen he had better keep strictly to "Polly wants a cracker." This is saying in plain words that from the first appearance of your char-

acter your audience will form an idea of him that should not be contradicted or disappointed. If you can manage rather to gratify their expectations in such measure that they will say to themselves, "I knew that was coming. Nothing else could have happened," you have scored a point. But if in the development of your story the characters make a departure from what has been anticipated by the audience, they will feel disappointment and regret. This is unfortunate, for your characters should always make their exit from the stage leaving a gratified feeling behind them.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CHARACTER CAST

THE position of a screen story writer is similar to that of a hostess who undertakes to provide entertainment for a set of guests. Imagine yourself with the responsibility upon you of entertaining an audience through the means of characters which you are to present to them. You will see how necessary it is that each character should be adequately presented, introduced in such a happy way that he will make a distinct impression. By a "character cast" is meant the summing up of the personages in your story in such a way that the scenario editor will quickly grasp their peculiarities and their relations to each other, so that as he introduces them one after another upon the screen his few words of introduction will give a strong outline of their personalities. Your first object is to make your characters interesting through these few happy words. When you begin to make out your cast place at the head of your page:

#### CHARACTER CAST

Then the name of the leading character in capitals, following the names of the other more important

characters, and in succession those which are of less and less importance. At the end you will usually find it necessary to group others as a crowd, under such heads as *children, policemen, chauffeurs, society folk*, etc.

It is not necessary to accompany each character as it appears with an exhaustive description of his peculiarities, his dress, and so on. Elaborate all the details for yourself, have in your own mind a complete picture of your personages, then select a few traits which include or that may stand for all the rest. For instance, if you should say, "Wade has fierce eyes and a hawk nose," those hints are sufficient to give a fair idea of the visage of that man. If you are describing your attractive heroine, such a phrase as this would bring her out better probably than many long ones: "She has laughing blue eyes, a dimple on each cheek, and a square little chin." This brings before us a springtime heroine freshly gay and wilful. Your miserly man might be described by saying "Beneath his pent-house brows his little eyes seem constantly searching the path he treads for pennies." The pathos of an overworked seamstress is flashed in the words, "Thin, pallid face, skinny neck, and trembling hands." We might multiply instances indefinitely, but these are enough to give you an idea of how to

proceed in describing the physical appearance of your characters.

I recommend you to make this rough cast early in your work. After you have developed your plot and polished your story, you will revise your cast and add a few bits of description indicating the mental attributes of your personages. This is the direct portrayal of a character like the first sketch an artist makes of the figure he means to fill in later. In literature strong characters are brought before the reader mostly through the talk of other characters. This cannot be done on the screen, but a pretty bit of work can be wrought out by showing the effect of one character upon another. This properly falls under the head of what is called "business," and the intelligent director will take charge of it. But without intruding upon the function of the director you can be of considerable help to him by indicating either in your character cast or in your synopsis the relation characters bear to each other. Be very careful about the selection of names for your characters. Names are not so important on the screen as they are in literature, for they flash before the eyes of the audience for a few seconds and are usually soon forgotten. But qualities inhere in names; Tom, Bill, Mary, Martha, and Jane inevitably bring certain associations that

bias us. When Vivian, Beatrice, or Stella appears on the screen, we unconsciously look for something out of the ordinary to follow. Priscilla suggests simplicity and daintiness and Jo a hoyden. If your character is to play comedy, don't weigh him down with a classical name; if he is to be a serious hero, avoid a name that suggests familiarity. There is something about the name of Amos that seems to put a man apart from his fellows. Henry is usually a good name for a lawyer or a banker, Frank and Dick are the "good-fellow" sort of names, while Edward and Stephen are dignified. For a high-toned society lady, Laura, Myra, Eleanor, and Sybil are good names; while women of a business turn of mind are suitably called Caroline, Ada, Harriet, Marion, or Anna. Your cuddling, domestic little woman naturally falls among the *ies*, Mollie, Pollie, Florie, Minnie, Allie, and all the rest. Dickens excelled in the invention of villainous names for his characters. I frankly shirk the responsibility of suggesting here, but with a little ingenuity you will succeed in discovering names that carry unpleasant impressions.

We give the following model character casts. The first one, we will suppose, belongs to a story entitled "The Castaways," in which the leading character is a man of a stern, forbidding type, who

refuses to be reconciled with his erring daughters until he lies on his deathbed. So we would put it this way:

### THE CASTAWAYS

By DORIS BROWN

#### EMILY EPPS

a wilful, capricious girl about twenty, with black eyes that melt and glow with the deepest feelings, and drive men crazy about her. She has a voluptuous mouth, a beautiful form, and a cold heart. All women dislike her except her younger sister, who is completely under her evil influence.

#### LUCY EPPS

a timid, blue-eyed little thing, naturally merry and honest, but afraid to take any step without the consent of EMILY, whom she has always obeyed. She is pretty, in the "angelic" style, and attracts the men who do not care for EMILY; therefore, she is never a rival to her sister.

#### HAL SMYTH

a fast young man with more money than brains, short and red-faced, blustering in manner. He has made a bet to carry EMILY off to his summer place on the Sound, and keep her there for two weeks.

#### MAJOR WILKS

Hal's tutor in the ways of the fast world, a middle-aged man who cultivates English whiskers and English tailors; but never pays cash for anything.

**OLD SAMMY  
BOTHAM**

a blunt Yankee farmer, overseer of Hal's place in the country; he has a shrewd face like a fox terrier and knows everything that he does not appear to see. He pities the victims of his sporting master and often does one of them a good turn.

**HENRY COOK**

a divinity student, grave and polite, shrinking from women in general, although knowing that it is part of his professional duty to know them. He falls in love with Lucy.

**MORRIS EPPS**

a retired banker, father of EMILY and Lucy. He is a stern, suspicious old man, who has held tight rein over his girls and driven them into deceitful ways. His little gray eyes gleam with wrath when he is angry and he is quick to lift his cane against beggar children. Since the death of his wife, who died of a broken heart, he has become an unbearable man in his home, and a terror to his neighbors and dependents.

A good way to learn how to make character casts is to take characters from novels, and describe them in your own words. For instance, the following one is made from the novel, "The Wife Out of Egypt," by Norma Lorimer:

## CHARACTER CAST

|                                   |                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>HADASSAH<br/>LEKEJIAN</b>      | the beautiful daughter of an Irish mother and a Syrian father; she has been educated in England where she was called <b>STELLA ADAIR</b> , her mother's maiden name.         |
| <b>MICHAEL<br/>IRETON</b>         | whose great passion for Stella sweeps down the barrier of race which separates them and gives him understanding and intellectual sympathy.                                   |
| <b>GIRGIS<br/>BOUTROS</b>         | Stella's cousin on her father's side; a wealthy cotton farmer and leader of the Copts. He has been entrapped into a Pan-Islamic movement owing to his hatred of the English. |
| <b>VERNON<br/>THORPE</b>          | a British army officer; scion of an old Norfolk family — in love with Stella, but having no sympathy or understanding of her father's people.                                |
| <b>NANCY<br/>THORPE</b>           | his sister, a sweet, frank English girl; Stella's staunch friend and former schoolmate. Falls in love with Stella's brother Nicholas.                                        |
| <b>NICHOLAS<br/>LEKEJIAN, Jr.</b> | Stella's brother, a composer of music, educated abroad; the finest example of a Syrian gentleman.                                                                            |
| <b>NICHOLAS<br/>LEKEJIAN</b>      | Stella's father, a wealthy and powerful Syrian who admires the English in spite of the ostracism which his race suffers in Cairo.                                            |

**HELEN  
LEKEJIAN**

Stella's mother, an Irish woman who has silently borne the ostracism imposed on her by her own people because she married the man she loved.

**MISS MAC  
NAUGHTON**

a sympathetic and lovely woman, principal of a select girls' school in London. She has reared Stella from the age of seven.

Natives, society people, policemen, Nationalists  
Bedouin farmers

Keep the number of your chief characters down to five. As a rule you should have either a male or female lead. If your play is big enough you may have an all star cast. But for the ordinary simple play it is better to have as few characters as possible. Some successful little comedies have contained only three characters and a super or two. But for the usual comedy drama you will have to count about five strong characters. If your chief rôle falls to a man, the female character which plays up to him, be it sweetheart, wife, or mother, must be brought out with almost as much care as you spend on the leading rôle. However, the leading rôle is the star, and all the other characters must move around him or her.

The twin brother and twin sister plot led to the device of the dual rôle where one actor is photo-

graphed in two parts. So much progress has been made in the photography of the dual rôle drama that the two characters may now even come close together and embrace one another. The weird feeling that is produced in the audience comes from the consciousness that whereas they see two persons there is but one, and while they appreciate the skilful photography the impression that is left is not altogether a pleasant one.

In a wonderful photoplay called "The River's End," the hero and another man are played by the same person, but the second man dies, and then the hero assumes his identity and carries on the story. The resemblance between the two characters is so strong that the plot turns upon it and is exceedingly well sustained.

Where there are lapses of time and the first part of the play deals with the hero and heroine in child parts, the nicest judgment is necessary in order to show the child as "father to the man" — that is, so related to the mature nature that whatever trait is to be emphasized later on sparkles forth in the young character. In a two part novel published some little time ago, this skill is a marked feature of the book; the incidents of the Prologue harmonizing very finely with the development of the bigger plot. In this connection I suggest that if pos-

sible it is well not to divide your story into such parts; lapses of time necessitate two sets of actors, and it is rather awkward to carry out in other respects. Prologues are apt to be disturbing to the smooth unfolding of the story unless handled with remarkable skill.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LOCALE AND ATMOSPHERE

A STORY is something that usually grows in the brain of a writer, developing today a bud, tomorrow another branch, finally blossoming into the perfect flower of the finished product. It seldom springs forth fully grown, with all its parts complete. In a case like this the author has only to bow meekly before his inspiration and put himself into the place of the acting secretary for a competent power. Then the characters, the plot, the situations, and the scenes will not be matters for him to decide, and everything will fit into its proper place without occasioning him any perplexities. But this happens so rarely that it may be left out of count.

Almost every author has to wrestle with every different part of his work; to stop and ask questions as to whether this incident is in tune with the rest, whether he has not made some egregious mistake in fixing certain points which he at first confidently established. Many doubts will intrude themselves, and it is only when the final page is written and the

story sent forth from his hands that his anxious criticism ends and he believes that it is out of his power to alter or undo.

But the better his outline, the more thorough his plan, the less trouble he will have. It is a wise economy of time and strength to make a complete plan of every situation, each character, and every *locale* that are to be dealt with in the story. Then all parts will fall into harmony and no contradictions occur. Your *locales*, in the part of the business connected with scenery and properties, are the affair of the director, who will take entire charge of arranging the details that make up the picture showing the places where your characters act out their history. He will dictate each material circumstance; order, now, a particular sort of furnishing for a house or court or inn, and again choose the proper occasion for an outdoor scene. He knows much better than you exactly what is right, and will pay no attention to any suggestions you make in a matter where it is his province to command. When your story has passed out of your charge, and he takes it, then it is the part of wisdom for you not to interfere. But unless you wish to have your story very much altered in its picturization from your original idea, you would better make such a clear statement of your plot, including

explanations of the kind of country where your action takes place and the general locality.

If you have written a story about a land of snow and ice, do not omit to mention that; if you have placed it in the tropics, let that be seen immediately. So, also, if hills and rivers must be brought in; or desert land; or if unusual properties, such as ships, trains, or waterfalls, are required. Give your *locale*, just as you give a suggestion of your period, for such distinct mention saves the time of the director and he will be glad to know at once what he has to undertake.

But the importance of fixing your *locale* is not to be minimized when you are writing your story. Then you should try to keep your mind fixed firmly on each particular place you take your characters into, and make a strong picture for yourself of every striking situation. No pains must be spared, no work shirked that will enable you to realize all the time exactly what surroundings are natural and inevitable to the incident you are writing up. Every time you change from a room to an outdoor scene, — from a schoolroom to a street, say, — you should pause and mentally draw a sketch of the place you are thinking of; get the idea clear; then you will invent the right action, then there will be no awkward discrepancy between

what you want to impress upon your audience and what you actually do convey. But if you slide over this part of your work and hurriedly stumble on with your action, in all probability you will be astonished some day, when you see your picture on the screen, to find that the director worked out an entirely different conception for himself from the one you fancied you had explained. It is a peculiar thing that the thing a writer neglects, because he finds it a little difficult to clarify to himself, becomes the weak point in his story and glaringly obtrudes its weakness at the most unexpected moment. If when you write your story you are uncertain whether Jane should be in the garden or in the conservatory when Edgar proposes, and leave it to chance, you will not only be likely to be deeply chagrined, when it is too late to alter it, to find that her being in the garden has thrown everything out of order; that she was meant by fate to be located in the conservatory, so that the jealous man spying upon her could be concealed behind the big potted palm; but also you will realize that if you had definitely arranged her location in the first place, you might have added some very strong situations which are now forever doomed to be omitted from your plot.

Write out, then, at the very beginning of your

story, a description of the 'part of the country where your action takes place. This is for yourself. You can afterwards reduce the description to a brief five or six word suggestion, for the enlightenment of the scenario editor. The more you elaborate your first draft, the more thorough you make your plan, the easier it will be for you when you come to the work of condensing the long story into the shape it must ultimately take in your synopsis.

Your *locale* should ever be definite and harmonize with both your plot and your characters. Some authors choose their characters and write the scenery around them; others are inspired with certain stories through the impression made by scenery. This is all a matter of habit or of temperament. Perhaps yours will compel you to write in a certain manner; and then you must proceed as you are led. But there will be one time when you are free to choose your place and your story habitat. Make the choice deliberately, and keep to your choice. It is fatal to dally and alter radical points after you have begun. If you have resolved to write a story about the great Northwest, where huge mountains rear toward the sky line, and snow forms deep drifts above buried farmhouses — then get your imagination actively to work, constructing situations where your characters act heroic

parts, and do not wander off into conventional scenes, with Maria and Harold flirting as though they were in a city drawing-room. They would n't do that. What is quite the expected thing in society would be out of place in the big out of doors. Get into your atmosphere; think yourself into their places; and then your sympathies will lead you aright.

When you plan a story about old Kentucky, study the local geography of that region and read up the history of the State, so that you will make no absurd mistake about your old-fashioned characters. And if Virginia is your *locale*, give your earnest attention to Virginia and do not confuse it with Delaware; putting in something about local customs which will astonish a stray witness of your scenario who happens to come from that State.

It is the habit of singing teachers to "place" the voice of their pupils, so that they may train their voices in the direction nature suggests. A scenario writer must also try to "place" his story so that it may go on smoothly without any breaks or discrepancies. Fix your *locale* once and for all; and then write up all the details that are in your plot to harmonize with that environment.

It is becoming more and more the custom to present to an audience the *locale* of the story before

any characters are introduced. Usually the first picture that is shown strikes the note of the story. When the audience see unrolling before them a vision of wild mountains, gorges, and frowning rocks, they know that they are to be taken into scenes of the Northwest and the upland, uncivilized country. Unconsciously their minds attune themselves to the atmosphere thus suggested. Or, if the story has to do with some little local spot, they will perceive a country store, wagons drawn up in front of it, loungers gathered around, and a general indication of a small trafficking routine. Again the screen flashes forth a palatial mansion, the steps guarded by stone lions, the walks winding away into the distance through a stately park. Now they know they are going to be brought among the aristocracy and see the lords and ladies of the land. Here is the setting for a society play. An anticipation is stirred in them so that the announcement of the first character — a Lady Dedlock let us say — joins itself on agreeably to the idea that has been aroused in them. Many of the most popular screen dramas have been indebted largely to their powerful depiction of atmosphere. Rex Beach created a field for himself by his splendid stories of Alaska. Zane Grey's vivid and accurate picturization of the desert country has given his stories peculiar vogue.

People like nothing better than to be taken on a wonderful voyage in imagination. The stay at homes particularly delight in being whirled off on a magic carpet into strange lands. The more even and prosaic their everyday existence, the more they long for the beautiful. Even though your story should deal with everyday life, you can put a touch of beauty here and there into your *locale*. Not every one can appreciate a great painting, but even the untutored little newsboy will pause a moment to gape at a window where some beautiful color scheme is displayed, even though it be in the drapery of dry goods.

Now you are the artist and your *locale* is your color scheme. Your aim is to attract the attention of your audience and prepare their minds for what is coming. Your *locale* must agree with the general tone of your story. It is to the story what background is to the painted picture. A good artist spends enormous effort upon making this background. As he mixes his umbers and sepias and chromes he has it constantly before his fancy to enhance the beauty of the prominent features of his picture. A single discordant object would spoil everything. Grouping is the director's affair, and if your luck is to have a perfect director he will correct any mistake you make. But you cannot

afford to take chances, for he may happen to be less than perfect. A scenario writer should do every part of his work as thoroughly as if he expected no aid or alteration from any source. And if your heart is in it, you will not be content with anything short of perfection.

Even if all the thought and care you spend upon creating the right atmosphere for your story seem to have been superfluous, since the screen effects are different from your ideals, your labor is worth while. It has helped to make a better artist of you. Perhaps it will be apparent in your next effort. Nothing is truer than that in the long run good work always tells.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE COMMERCIAL SIDE

It has always been recognized more or less that there is a seamy side to literature, for authors have not refrained from uttering bitter complaints about their hard lots and taking the public into their confidence about their tribulations. James Payn wrote a most amusing account of his own and his friends' troubles in an article which appeared in an English magazine and was entitled "The Seamy Side of Letters." In the days of the renowned Doctor Johnson writers apparently had more to complain of than they have at present. Undoubtedly things have been growing better for writers, but there has been great exaggeration about the fortunes made through writing books. Good authorities tell us that very few writers reap more than a bare living from the products of their pens.

Perhaps a secret consciousness of this has been the stimulus that has sent writers eagerly and hopefully toward the occupation of writing for the screen. Remarkably optimistic rumors creep out now and then concerning this "get rich quick" method of grasping fortunes. Writers who have

produced a fairly good novel that has had, say, in its first two years a sale of four thousand copies and has brought them in royalties amounting to six hundred dollars, wildly fancy that they can sell that same novel to a motion picture company for fifty thousand. For a novelette that has appeared in a magazine they expect many times the amount paid for it as a literary performance.

I hate to shatter a brilliant bubble, but better the truth at first than a disappointment in the end. Motion picture companies are eager — yes, more than eager — for good material. So for that matter are book publishers and magazine editors. For an extraordinary “find” all these dealers in brain products are willing to pay the highest prices that are compatible with their own interests. But the business of motion pictures is not run in the realm of fairy land; it is a practical business subject to the rules and regulations of other kinds of commerce. Some of the talkers who enjoy deluding people are wont to make such a statement as this: “Why, such and such a company is spending half a million dollars on the production of a story! Compared with that output what is fifty thousand dollars for the author?” Now, when authors sell a novel to a motion picture company on a royalty basis it would seem fair for them to receive fifty

per cent of the profits. But pray consider that a novel is merely raw material which has to be worked up by many different processes. First, there is the continuity writer who spends at least six weeks in making a working scenario from the book. Please note that the modern working scenario is a complicated thing. It sometimes amounts to the bulk of a printed volume and omits no smallest detail necessary for the information of the director. It is a fortunate thing for the author that he is not required to do this work, for it is a profession in itself and few authors have the natural ability or training to cope with it. Now it comes to the hands of the director who may either use it as it is or change it. Some companies give their directors wide liberty in this respect, while others oblige them to keep to the letter of the script. The privilege of a director to make alterations in a story depends upon his personal reputation and the standing he has gained through his good work. Of course, every one realizes how much the success of the story depends upon the stars. After the scenes have been "shot," the film is ready to pass into the hands of the cutting editor who assembles the picture. He can make or mar, as his function is to cut out all unnecessary pictures and join the story together in a logical way so that it will

run smoothly. After the cutting editor comes the title man, whose business it is to furnish the subtitles for the story. When you consider all the different people who handle the material you will realize how much work has to be put on your novel in order to make it into a photoplay, and that fifty per cent of the profits is too great a proportion for you to receive. Five per cent would be nearer justice. Now, a successful picture rarely makes more than one hundred thousand dollars for the producer, and if your share were five per cent you would receive five thousand dollars. So you can easily see that when you sell a novel outright for five thousand dollars you are making an exceedingly good bargain.

We have been speaking of a very successful picture, but most pictures that are put on have only fair success. So you can compute for yourself about what a fair price is for the average novel.

It usually takes an author about a year to write a novel. The author who puts out more than one novel a year is phenomenal. Many famous authors deliberately give two years to the creation of a single novel. Taking into consideration the amount of time and thought spent upon the creation of a single book, the author has a perfect right to reap as much advantage from it as possible. He may, if

he is lucky, sell the serial rights, the book rights, the dramatic rights, and finally the screen rights. It is unreasonable to expect the last transaction to bring in an amount that is greatly out of proportion to the rest. The author of a popular book receives more for the moving picture rights of it than the unknown writer of an original scenario because of the advertising value of a successful published work. But seventy-five per cent of the novels that are written are unavailable for screen use. Special writers for the screen have a great advantage. In the first place, it takes far less time to write a good story in synopsis form than it does to work it out into a full-blown novel. A good scenario may be written in six weeks; with practice and skill in half the time. Now, suppose if for from three to six weeks' work, and not the hardest work, but pleasant, delightful effort, you receive from five hundred to three thousand dollars, is not this very well worth while?

Sensational rumors to the contrary, good short story writers are well pleased to receive one hundred and fifty dollars for a magazine story on which they have spent a month. Mr. Julian Hawthorne, who certainly is an authority on this point, recently said that few of the most successful writers of short stories are able to gain an income of more

than five thousand a year. But this is far above the average. There is no doubt that the same amount of ability possessed by a man who devotes himself to literature used in the professions of law, medicine, or civil engineering, might obtain for him greater returns in money, but the writer who has any love for his art will discount this for the pleasure he gets from writing. When things have gone a little awry one may recall Robert Louis Stevenson's saying — "No other labor gives a man his daily bread upon such joyful terms."

The practical side of marketing your scenario is something to which you must bring all your native wit and shrewdness. A mart is a mart be it for dry goods or brain stuff, and the ignoramus who changes his treasure for a case of shagreen spectacles deserves to suffer for his stupidity. Beyond question there is chicanery in the motion picture business. On the western coast some little shyster company starts up each week, puts out a flaunting sign, gathers up bushels of script, and disappears. Other companies, while advertising that they will pay good prices for stories, have stuff written up in their own studios from ideas gratuitously obtained. But are there not tricksters in every trade? Are there not merchants who deceive, quack doctors and land agents who will fleece you out of your

last dollar? Taken as a whole motion picture companies are as a rule honest and reliable. It is not their habit to steal authors' ideas and note them down in a great blue book, although this has been alleged of them. Unhappily there is no patent on ideas, and how could there be, since owing to some peculiar concurrence of thought waves the same idea nearly always occurs to several people in different parts of the world at the same time? The inspiration that you fondly believe to be wholly your own may be simultaneously developing in the brain of some one way out in India or Japan. The lesson to be deduced from this is — try to utilize your ideas quickly, write your story while you feel the heat and interest of it burning in your mind. Revise it carefully, but don't do as saintly, unpractical Bronson Alcott advised writers to do, "Lay it in your desk for twenty years before you offer it to a publisher." On the contrary, as soon as your story is done, neatly typed, paged, fastened together with clamps, and protected in a cover of stout blue or brown paper, hurry it off to your chosen motion picture company. But be wise and wary about the choice of that company, for in all probability if your script comes back you will be obliged, if not to completely recopy it, to spend considerable time on freshening it up.

The marketing of a script involves, first, harmonizing it with the preferences of a company. Every company has its own peculiar tastes and policy. It aims toward variety; nevertheless it is apt to run along the same groove, being biased by the wishes of the stars who naturally are most successful in certain rôles. In order to understand the needs of the company at the time you are offering your story, you should know what stars that company is featuring. If a certain company has only a man lead it is useless to offer your girl heroine story. Study your trade journals and select as your market the company having a star who seems to correspond in type with your heroine. It is important to keep posted about the stories companies are running or are about to produce, as they seldom care to produce several of the same kind of stories in succession. If they have put on several Wild-West stories they want to go widely apart from that in their next production. Hardened veterans in the field of literature will tell you that it does not make any difference how many times you send out a story. Keep writing them, keep sending them, and forget a story as soon as it leaves your hands. But this cold, cynical advice will not appeal to the young author. There is something about the first freshness of a story that is like nothing else on land

or sea. It may have to make twenty lonely voyages before it finds harbor, but happy will it be for you if it reaches port the first trip. So spend all the time that is needed and give all the pains possible to the study of the motion picture market, for selling is a matter of fitting and it will be largely your own fault if you make a misfit.

Some small details, such as the preparation of your manuscript, are not unimportant. Of all things have it clean and legible, with your address on the upper left-hand corner. Your manuscript will consist of three parts. After the title-page comes the brief synopsis of from two hundred and fifty words to twelve hundred words; next your character cast; third, the scenario or working synopsis, which is really a condensed novel in five thousand words. The fourth part of the script, the continuity, is totally unnecessary and a waste of time. The continuity will be written in the studio and if you send one it will probably not be used. But it is a valuable thing for you to study continuity writing, because it will help you to write your working synopsis in logical sequence and develop your power of visualization.

It may seem unnecessary to advise writers of photoplays to go often to see moving pictures. Perhaps you have been a "movie fan," but you

have gone for enjoyment, not for profit. You will find your point of view entirely different now that you go to study the story. You should analyze from first to last, take particular note of every word that flashes on the screen, the producing company, the director, the staff writer as well as the names of the stars. Of course, you will observe whether it is a novel or an original scenario. You must cultivate the habit of memorizing all the facts as well as the points of the plot. After some practice you will unfailingly notice the moment of the crisis and possibly may divine the plot from that. Anyway, whatever you forget, go out with the climax firmly fixed in your mind. When you reach home jot down in your notebook a brief outline of the story you have seen and do not forget to add the name of the producing company and the stars who appeared in it. If you persevere in this for a year you will have an excellent fund of material to draw on that will help you greatly in placing your story.

## CHAPTER X

### TITLES AND SCREEN TERMS

NEARLY everybody fancies, until he tries it, that he has a knack for making good titles; just as most people believe that they can write striking advertisements. To take a piece of paper and write down at haphazard a dozen or so series of words thrown together, with nouns standing out like fine headlights on a shabby car, is easy enough, but if you select from this medley one title and criticise it, you will probably find it to be a thing of no substance, containing neither inspiration for yourself nor charm for other people. A title should have both these things. From your own point of view the title suggests the plot. Some authors cannot write until they have secured an appropriate name as their starting-point. But occasionally a title changes under the development of the story as some illuminating idea grows out of a new situation.

A title is more than a name. It is a magnet and ought to be a powerful enough one to exercise a very wide attraction. The title of your story should arouse curiosity, awaken interest, and in

some subtle way relate itself to the popular ideal of the hour. What appeal, for instance, would "The Mysteries of Udolpho" have for the modern world? "The Wounded Dove" would provoke ridicule in this age, just as "The Ridin' Kid" would have been shuddered over by the ultra-refined audience of the Victorian period. If you are writing in harmony with your age and your story is in touch with the times, your title will naturally be attractive to an up-to-date audience.

James Irving, one of the best authorities on this subject, says: "Of late writers have begun to give title its proper share of attention. They have come to realize that there are three important elements in successful photoplay writing. In order of importance these are plot, synopsis, and title. . . . The main purpose of the title is to advertise your play to the public. . . . But before your play can appeal to the public it must appeal to some editor. It is essential, therefore, that the title appeal to the editor. . . . Do not make the mistake of selecting a high-sounding or pretty title. . . . If you will select a title that piques curiosity you will find that your work will be given an instantaneous chance to prove itself worth while. If you stop to think you will find this is true. . . . Compare the lack of interest in such titles as 'The Village Convict,' a

story by C. H. White, or 'The Shot,' by Pushkin, with such suggestive and appealing titles as 'The Upper Berth,' by Crawford, or the 'Riders of the Purple Sage,' a Fox production, or 'Hearts of the World,' by Mr. Griffith. . . . Try to make your title from three to five words in length. It is apt to be clumsy and awkward if it is longer. Do not, however, go to the extreme and make your title so short that it is vague and meaningless. . . . Don't reveal your plot in your title."

What Sam Weller said of letter writing applies to title, "When she reads it she'll wish there was more and that's the great art o' letter writin'." The object of your title is not so much to classify the story as to lure the casual observer to penetrate deeper into the mystery it suggests. If you can touch upon some partly concealed vital interest, you will have made your point. Better to deal with the action than with the atmosphere of the story. Some recent popular novels describe the lay of the land in their titles beginning with the "Valley" of such and such a place. Instead of this, make a quick dart into the heart of your drama and bring out something of all-compelling interest. A title that interests the public in the leading character through striking the note of his nature is good. Regarded from the screen standpoint, "The Cor-

sair" is a better title than "Childe Harold," as the one instantly suggests picturesque outlines which the imagination can fill in, while the other, being merely a name, does not hold the attention. As a rule it is better not to name the story after one of the characters. Some splendid dramatic novels have been thus handicapped by their names. It has been necessary to change the title of some. This has been prejudicial to them and has lessened their value. Some good novels have been rejected entirely on account of poor titles. It is only when a book has been long before the public that the name stands for the association. No one would meddle with "David Copperfield," "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," or "Adam Bede," under any circumstances. But you cannot take these cases as a precedent for yourself in the beginning of your career. No young writer can afford to pattern himself after the exceptional models. So you may take it as a general rule that a short, snappy, taking title will often unlock the door for you where a commonplace one would fail.

Although you will not need to use the technical screen terms in writing your scenario, it is highly desirable that you should understand them, so I append here a list of the following most used screen terms:

**SCENARIO:** A working or detailed synopsis of the plot told in story form.

**SYNOPSIS:** An abstract of your story told in picturizing words.

**CAST:** Cast or Character Cast, a list of the personages of chief importance in your story.

**CONTINUITY:** An extension of the scenario in which everything is detailed, including scenes, sub-titles, and inserts as they are to be used by the director.

**SCENE PLOT:** A list of the scenes used in the continuity, grouped together according to the place in which they occur, so that the director may tell at a glance exactly how many scenes are to be taken in each set.

**SET:** An interior, such as court-room, drawing-room, dining-room, etc. Arrangement of background or furniture for a scene.

**LOCATION:** An exterior or place outside of a studio where scenes are photographed.

**STUDIO:** The place where photoplays are made.

**SCENE:** The action in a photoplay that is taken without stopping the camera.

**MAIN TITLE:** Name of a play.

**SUB-TITLES:** A word or sentence thrown on the screen between scenes; either introducing a new character or explaining something not covered by the action.

**LAPSE OF TIME TITLE:** A sub-title, such as "Twenty Years Later." These should be avoided as much as possible. An interesting sub-title may be used to carry on the story and suggest lapse of time.

**INSERT:** A letter, telegram, newspaper item, or any other matter of a similar kind thrown on the screen between scenes to explain a situation.

**FLASH:** A rapid reappearance on the screen of something seen before; as when an insert has been shown and the audience have read it and it is shown on the screen again merely for a moment.

**VISIONING:** A character remembering the past, dreaming or meditating. This effect is obtained by double exposure.

**DOUBLE EXPOSURE:** A camera trick—used in showing characters in dangerous scenes, as in falling over precipices, bridges or buildings. First the camera is taken to the top of the building or bridge or cliff and the scene is photographed. Then in the studio the film is rewound and a scene is taken showing the actor walking as though on the building, but all the while in perfect safety. Double Exposure is also used in "Visioning," and in "Dual Rôles."

**CLOSE-UP:** A character or scene photographed with the camera near the object or action.

**IRIS:** A device on the camera lens which permits the view to be gradually enlarged or reduced until the scene disappears. "Iris In" or "Iris Out" are directions used in continuities.

**DISSOLVE:** One scene gradually becomes indistinct, but before it has ended another scene has begun; that is the overlapping of parts of two scenes.

**CUT-BACK:** Cut-Back, or Throw-Back, is an arrangement of scenes whereby the action in a play is interrupted to show another scene and then returned to the former scene. The Cut-Back is used to create suspense, to eliminate too frequent use of sub-titles, and to cover a lapse in action.

**REVERSE ACTION:** A scene is photographed, but the camera is running backward. When the film is completed and shown, the effect is of an automobile running up a hill or an actor jumping from the ground to the top of a building.

**REEL:** About one thousand feet of film. Feature pictures run from five to seven reels. Comedies are as a rule one or two reels.

**SHOOT:** A studio term meaning to photograph.

**EPISODE:** A part of a serial, about two reels.

**FADE-IN:** A gradual appearance of a scene upon the screen.

**FADE-OUT:** A gradual disappearance of a scene upon the screen.

**LEAD:** The principal character in a photoplay; either male or female.

**PROPS:** An abbreviation of properties; the various articles or objects used in producing a photoplay.

**SCRIPT:** An abbreviation of manuscript.

**SCREEN:** The plain surface on which a photoplay is projected.

**STILL:** A photograph taken with an ordinary camera and showing a scene or characters from a photoplay; usually used for advertising purposes.

**ANGLE-SHOT:** A view of a scene taken from a different angle.

**RELEASE:** A certain date on which a play is given out for exhibition.

**RELEASE TITLE:** The main title finally chosen for a photoplay. Sometimes a temporary or working title is used while the picture is being produced and this is changed before the picture is released.

**RETAKE:** When a scene is unsatisfactory it is photographed a second time.

**REGISTER:** To portray emotions.

**TRUCK-BACK:** The act of moving the camera back from the scene while it is being photographed.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ART OF PICTURIZING

THE scenario writer who makes a study of his craft will follow in many respects the method of the child in materializing his fancies. The child collects his toys about him and proceeds to construct something that is the outward symbol of a story he has in his head. As he builds, he makes a running commentary, explaining to himself what the meaning is of each bit he adds on. He is not satisfied with the mental outline of his story until he perceives it actually shown in some kind of shape, however rough, before his eyes.

Now, this is precisely what the scenario writer must do with his plot; work it out bit by bit in mental pictures until every incident, every scene, is as vivid to him as if it existed in actual color and form before him. With his bare outline open before him he should begin and write out briefly but clearly each scene, successively, as it will appear in the screen version of his story. It will be well for him to accept the hint the child gives him, and realize how necessary it is that each incident should be made the subject of a separate act of picturiza-

tion. The building up of a scenario is a constant succession of picturized incidents. There must be no breaks, no lapses, no interludes that are unaccounted for. If any period of time intervenes between one scene and another — a day, a week, ten years — it must be indicated by a *caption* explanatory of the interval. All this work is to be undertaken for the benefit of your own composition; not in order that you may give a “continuity” to the scenario editor. It is not necessary to show this comprehensive scenario at all; your abstract of it, or synopsis, will be sufficient. But if you do not take the trouble to make such a continuity for yourself, you will scarcely find it possible to write a perfect synopsis, with every striking picture brought out distinctly, for the examination of the scenario editor. And recollect that he is not going to supplement your defects by the use of his superior intelligence; he has other demands upon his time. Your story must stand or fall upon its power of picturization.

The method you will have to pursue, to produce a powerful synopsis, is to write out for yourself, first, the complete scenario something after this fashion: With pad and pencil at hand jot down the opening scene of your story in a few words. Then close your eyes and picture that scene vividly in

your imagination. If you are not able to make a clear picture of what you have written, — if it is a blurred and hazy sketch, merely *suggesting* something which you know exists somewhere in the back of your own brain, but has not yet been made into definite shape, — then either cut it out as valueless, or else go over and over it until you have wrought out of the haze the actual picture you wish. There is the temptation to slur this part of your work; it is, I acknowledge, the real drudgery of photoplay writing, and until it grows easy to you through much practice it will be very hard. But the result pays. The act of intense concentration is in itself a triumph of mind over matter, and the more you practise it the more your mind will grow.

Having formed your mental picture, concentrate deeply upon it, banishing by force of will every irrelevant fancy. You will need for this work what George Eliot called “deep inward vision” — the most wonderful acquirement of the human brain, and the one that more than any other is the mark of superior genius. If you do not succeed, after many efforts, in keeping all your attention upon your subject, do not give it all up, nevertheless, for this is the only road to excellent achievement in the work of scenario writing.

When you have mentally portrayed your first scene and explained it in colorful words in your text, then go on to the next one, outlining it in the same manner, reproducing this process throughout the entire course of your story until the climax is reached. If you can draw even a little, you will find it very useful to make some sort of sketch of each one of your important characters, so that he may appear before you as you write out his part. You should fasten your attention so hard upon the personage you wish to make prominent that he will take on the very characteristics of the vigor with which your mind is endowing him. When you have succeeded in creating a really individual character, one who can act and live, then you may congratulate yourself upon having accomplished a masterpiece of fiction, whether it ever succeeds commercially or not. But the probability is that in the long run any excellent achievement will triumph over circumstances; snubbed for the time, it will eventually overcome its troubles and demonstrate its worth; for the world is sorely in need of superior work.

I suggest that of all things you avoid "the evil consequences of hurry" in this business. A wise old author once said that few people know what a factor time is in the working out of good ideas. Al-

though I believe in writing out a plot "at a heat," before it has opportunity to slip away from you, I also believe that one should be very careful and deliberate in elaborating the details of his story. Be a critic of your own work; use good judgment about it, and do not be too partial to yourself. If you are over-lenient about your faults, somebody else will be as strict as you are indulgent, and in the end you will be mortified over faults you have neglected to amend. It is better for you to be severe toward yourself than to solicit the advice of your friends. They will either flatter you or misunderstand you, and in the latter case you may be led to discard something that is really good. An idea that has your own approval ought not to be knocked out by the contempt of somebody who does not know half as well as you do just what you are trying to do. You yourself are the best judge of your own ideas, if you will be honest with yourself. The mercantile worth of them will be decided by others, but their intrinsic value is properly appreciated by their own author unless his judgment is sadly warped. So keep the lamp of faith burning within you day after day, and work on resolutely, concentrating with all your power upon the wonderful work of picturization.

Every writer strikes out, in the course of his

work, some little original methods that are helpful to himself. One will make a chart of his plot; another a map; some one else cannot work profitably without an actual set of manikins, which he manipulates after the fashion of theatrical characters. Naturally, you will follow out the plan you discover to be most in harmony with your own mood. The great point is to keep your attention steadily fixed upon your story until it becomes to you, for the time being, the most important thing in the world. It is essential, while your story is in progress, that you should work on it every day, and if possible at the same time every day. Practised writers find that the action of the brain is more or less mechanical and that certain moods, certain impulses, recur at about the same hour every day. I have found that the best plan is to think out my plan for the next day's work the night before, and impress upon myself upon retiring the particular thing that is to be done in the morning. Often the brain will work out a problem in sleep; often inspirations come in dreams.

The morning is the best time for work; and although there are many writers who claim that their inspirations come at night, and whose habit it is to "burn the midnight oil," such feverish energy is usually short-lived, and the author who

wishes his career to be long as well as successful must make his health a prime consideration. There is an old book, once very popular and now antiquated, that gave much excellent advice upon this subject. It is "The Intellectual Life," by Philip Gilbert Hamerton. He divided the author's life into three parts, calling them the physical basis, the moral basis, and the intellectual basis; and he laid enormous stress upon the value of the physical basis, insisting upon regular exercise, a nourishing diet, and plenty of fresh air. To these I should add some pleasant recreation, for the effect of cheerfulness upon the system is very great. The paramount importance of health to a person who aims to concentrate with intensity is evident.

Another good suggestion is that you should try to keep in the same mood while you are writing your story. If it began with a joyful tone, you must not allow yourself to lapse into seriousness; or if you have begun with the intention of writing strong melodrama, it will be necessary to keep yourself keyed up to that pitch throughout. "The author," says Irving, "should go over in his mind each incident of his story before setting it to paper and determine if each one is impregnated with the spirit of a certain mood. If not, then he must ruthlessly cast it aside; it certainly will not aid in

securing unity of expression; for, to bring about this desired effect, every event must be inevitable to the clear working out of the plot and must be in mood with all the rest of the plot fabric."

The world's great authors have all possessed the power of keeping in the mood of their work. They harmonized thoroughly with their characters and their plots. Perhaps the most striking trait of Dickens was his extraordinary power of throwing himself into the mood of his story. It was related of him by Mundello, who painted his portrait as he was working in his library, that "he worked with intensity, almost with agony," seeming to live and breathe in the creatures of his imagination.

It may seem to you that all this writing of continuity is exhausting and not worth while, since you are not going to offer it for sale when completed, but look upon it from the point of view of stored-up material from which you are to select the essential points of your plot. As I said before, a working synopsis of about five thousand words is the proper form in which to submit your story. As it is in reality a condensed novel, you will realize that every phrase must make a point and that there can be nothing in the way of description or philosophizing. The more vividly you are able to picture your scenes for yourself, the easier it will be for

the scenario editor to comprehend and appreciate your story. He cannot understand what you are driving at unless you have succeeded in projecting a picture before his imagination. I emphasize this so distinctly because it is so easy for a writer to suppose that he has made a very strong picture, which will be weather-proof through all the changes it will be subjected to, when really his tones will not wash. Considered from the practical point of view a scenario is not so different from any other material substance that must pass through many examining hands. Your pictures must be beautiful enough to satisfy the critics who view it from the standpoint of good taste, and it must be clear and definite enough to satisfy the exactions of the craftsmen who are going to put it upon the screen. So all the time that you are writing your story, you are obliged to keep in mind the people who are going to make a picture out of it.

## CHAPTER XII

### WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT POSSIBLE ON THE SCREEN

THE business of writing for the screen must be considered from two different aspects: first, the practicability of your story in the hands of the camera man, and secondly, its qualities for pleasing the audience. We have already covered most of the latter part of this subject and but little more remains to say; but we have only slightly touched upon the mechanical part of the photoplay and we will deal with that now.

The "photoplay stage" comprises a range of about fifteen feet around the camera. When an actor moves out of this range the camera is forced to move also to get him within its focus. Consequently, in writing your synopsis, be careful not to include too much space in a scene. You may show a vista or far-off view of a street or a ballroom, for instance, but a closer view of only a small section of them. Many things that are possible in photoplay producing are difficult to do, and so, if they can be avoided, they would better be.

If you are imagining the action of a troop of horsemen dashing along the road kicking up a tremendous lot of dust, recollect that such a dust will obscure the action of the camera. Singular and interesting effects are sometimes produced unexpectedly in the act of photography. A writer lately adduced an instance where two airplanes collided in mid-air while the camera was grinding. Spectators who see this in a story would naturally infer that it was intentionally produced at enormous expense and with great pains; where, as a matter of fact, a purely fortuitous occurrence happening to strike the camera was seized upon by the cutting editor and incorporated by him into the story he was working upon. You may see in the next picture you go to witness some remarkable scene of steamboat collision, railroad accident, or other phenomenal occurrences and go away encouraged to believe that if other writers can make use of such effects you may also introduce them into your scenarios. Although producers will go to incredible expense to give splendor to a great story, there is a good deal of exaggeration on the screen as there is on the stage and "things are not always what they seem." Producers are very desirous of avoiding all unnecessary expense and young writers cannot be too careful to maintain simplicity and

economy in the production of their stories. To be able to judge accurately between what is really expensive and what is not, one not only must study the taking of pictures in the studio, but also "on location." On both the eastern and western coasts there are opportunities of seeing the camera at work out of doors, and the scenario writer must keep himself posted upon the movements of producing companies and take advantage of every chance to see the camera at work. Out in Hollywood I one day saw the camera at work upon "a rescue scene," where a girl was fleeing on horseback from a troop of brigands. The rescue was effected by a cowboy who swung her onto his horse from her own and rode off with her. The location chosen for the scene was a vacant corner where there was much wild growth and the ground rose gradually until it lost itself in the hill country. There were half a dozen men and horses and the girl with her horse, but the scene was so adroitly managed by the passing and repassing of these few men and horses that they were made to appear like a troop. It was most interesting to watch the directing of this little scene. The heroine had rather a hard time of it tumbling off the saddle and being planted upon it again as the director made her go over and over her part until she got it to suit him. She had

to fall down and be hauled about until her muscles must have ached considerably from the strain. But as heroines must, she took it merrily, and it was all in the day's work for her.

It is instructive for writers to observe and take notes of outdoor scenes like this. One learns only through experience the economy of means used by the director to produce big effects, and the writer will aid him materially by so constructing his story as to bring all essential effects within the easy compass of the camera. Here is where practical knowledge comes in and proves the immense advantage of the observing, careful writer over the careless amateur.

Among the things to avoid is the risking of actors' lives. Where your story demands the jeopardizing of life, the director will take it into consideration. He will know how this can be accomplished without actual danger. Avoid unusual weather conditions and extraordinary outdoor scenic effects in general. Wonderful things may be done and are being done with the camera, but it is too venturesome of a writer to insist upon marvellous effects.

Passing from the mechanical difficulties to the moral ones brings us to consideration of the National Board of Censorship. Anita Loos, who is an

authority upon this subject, says the National Board will usually disapprove:

1. Pictures in which a character triumphs by virtue of immorality alone, as in the case of a woman who takes "the easiest way" and achieves thereby greater success and happiness than her honest sister.
2. Scenes of debauchery.
3. Stories written for the sole purpose of featuring some unique or shocking crime.
4. Scenes showing the technical methods of committing crimes.
5. Stories which might incite impressionable persons to mischief by virtue of mental suggestion. This classification includes lynching scenes when laid in the present; scenes which emphasize suicide as a means of ending one's troubles; cruel practical jokes, especially when perpetrated by youngsters; and pictures in which deadly weapons constantly appear.
6. Unpatriotic themes.
7. Stories which would encourage Bolshevism or anarchy.
8. Stories tending to justify "the unwritten law" as an excuse for murder.
9. Libels on persons, places, or industries.

I will add to this that anything likely to hurt the feelings of the average audience must be avoided, such as plays of partisanship in which any particular form of religion is ridiculed or thrown into disfavor. Exceptions to this are Mohammedanism and Mormonism: religions which are so little in favor with the average civilized audience that

criticism of them is tolerated. But no story in which Quakers or Shakers or other sects are made absurd should be introduced, and although certain episodes are occasionally brought in of the immersion of shrieking victims in a river, even such instances may offend the susceptibilities of some rigid person in the audience and would better be avoided. Anything that contains too broad a criticism of particular localities would be likely to be rejected by the scenario editor because the average person is exceedingly susceptible on the point of his own home region.

Notwithstanding these few conventions, which are really after all more matters of good taste than anything else, the scope of the scenario writer is extensive. It is as broad as life itself; or rather as broad as that portion of life which you can by any possibility compass within your own experience. And by experience I do not necessarily mean what you have actually passed through in your own personality, but all that has become part and parcel of your own emotional life. Stories related by others to you that have stirred you deeply take their place in the volume of memory as story material. A single wave of sympathy stirred by another's sufferings may give you a thousand thrills which, passing through your mental organism in many

different channels, may become the impulses for innumerable plots. What you may write about is chiefly a matter of what you *can* best write about. If you are honest with yourself you know something of your own limitations and powers. Experience will teach you that you can make vivid stories from what is nearest to your life and your heart. It is best for you to study your own *locale* thoroughly; the better you know it, the more you will be enabled to bring in realistic touches. But do not cherish the delusion, which is common among young writers, that merely because an extraordinary thing is true and has actually come within your experience it thereby constitutes an interesting story. Some one remarked that "art is a bit of nature seen through a temperament." I have had many stories sent to me with the preface: "This story is true and the incidents actually happened." Now, editors learn to shun stories of this character. They are pretty sure to be devoid of real dramatic point and intrinsic value. It is not facts, but the way in which you present facts, that makes a story. You must set out to captivate the sympathies of your audience. Exaggerate slightly the fine qualities of your hero or heroine. Exaggeration is permitted in literature, desired in drama, and ordained on the screen. There is something about the

very art of photography that calls for exaggeration. Perhaps you will recollect having been displeased with a photograph of yourself which you knew in your heart was accurate in every detail, but somehow it lacked that ineffable, indefinable quality that makes a photograph pleasing. What you exact for your own picture is analogous to what an audience unconsciously demands of the screen. It wants the veil of romance thrown over the commonplace. It wants life dressed up so skilfully that while the idea of actuality is always present the suggestion of romance is never absent. Love stories appeal to all the world, since "all the world loves a lover." Scarcely any one is cynical enough to dislike love scenes unless it be the very small boy who deems it manly to mock at sentiment. Elderly people who have retained any human sentiments revel in romantic stories because they recall their own youth while, of course, to the young love stories are always delightful.

Beside the love interest there is the element of human interest which touches every one in the world. H. C. Warnack said very aptly: "Why is it, since everybody is trying to write motion picture plays, that the studios all over the country cry out that they are starving for stories? Mostly, the answer is that our stories are not human. They

are things we think up. They are mechanically clever. They have plot and action, but they are not human. They have artifice, but they are also artificial. They have none of that spontaneity of the thing that springs from the heart. They are not written with a glow and they bring no new joy to the beholder when once they have been filmed. They have none of that stuff that makes the bud and bloom of springtime. They amuse the mind, but the laughter they provoke is not from the heart, and they have no tears."

But perhaps the best summing up of the philosophy of *How To Do It* is contained in Wilkie Collins's terse advice upon the method of impressing an audience: "Make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, make 'em wait." I have analyzed this formula and find that it constitutes the best marching orders any writer can follow. You are commanded first to amuse and entertain your audience; to attract attention in some pleasant way and win interest in what is to follow. So this involves your choosing an unusual subject. Not necessarily a grotesque or extraordinary or incredible one, but something with freshness and variety in it. In comedies the amusement that you create must be kept up through the entire story. After the audience has finished one laugh, it expects another one to be

provoked, and you must satisfy it. Genuine humor is scarce, yet human nature craves fun more than anything else, and that is why mock humor is often used to supply the lack of what is really funny. It would seem that ludicrous adventures had been exhausted, and yet every day sees some new eccentricity more or less mirth-provoking. Make your audience laugh if you possibly can. To make it cry is a matter of finer diplomacy and a more difficult achievement. Your appeal to sentiment or feeling must be very real, very genuine, to make its effect upon an audience which is keen to detect the least trace of artificiality. People will refuse to squeeze forth a single tear if they can help it; if you want them to weep for you, your story must be really compelling.

So Wilkie Collins's order is a large one and it becomes stupendous in its final clause: "make 'em wait." In the chapter upon "Plot" I have treated of this suspense element which is the greatest factor in the dramatic story; so I will now go on to speak about the avoidance of hackneyed themes. I think too much has been said upon this to the discouragement of young writers. A list of plots that have been done to death would make any beginner believe that it was impossible for him to strike out anything novel. It is easy for a jaded

critic to snap out advice about avoiding such ideas as the child stolen by gipsies; two men in love with one girl; the revenge of a discharged workman; reconciliation effected by a child; the poor, lonesome relation made happy at the Christmas festival; or the heroic choice between love and duty. But if you eliminate these you strike out most of the themes about which it is possible to weave original plots. Again I repeat, it is not the plot but the handling that makes the original story. If two thousand years ago "there was nothing new under the sun," that must be absolutely true to-day; but it never was and never will be absolutely true so long as the human heart responds to the note of melody evoked by skilful fingers from an old instrument. The ancient instrument of love is still capable of a million tunes. You yourself are just a little different from all your forbears. Work hard to bring to the light that slight difference, cultivate it as the basic material for a new twist in the old plot. You cannot avoid dealing with trite subjects, and the authority who suggests it gives advice which it is impossible to follow. Does not the modern artist who wishes to make his figures suggest something wonderful conform in almost all particulars to the standard which has been followed for centuries? Yet he endeavors to add some little

touch which makes his picture differentiate itself from those of other artists. Does the Parisian designer who sends out "beautiful creations" this present season hope that he has been able to accomplish the miracle of actually evolving anything new? At most, he has made new combinations from old stuffs. Now, it is the power of making new combinations that will elevate you above the ranks of the plodders who are content year after year to tread the beaten paths. So I do not say, avoid the old plot; only, make it fresh by your treatment.

Allegories and dream plays are not popular with editors and a fairy story must be wonderfully good to get by that practical person. Until you have achieved a solid reputation you had better not try the costume play. A little study of this matter will convince you that it is seldom put on except when accompanied by a well-known name. The slogan, "We welcome new writers," swung by both magazine editors and producers, is true; nevertheless the new writer must be modest and tactful if he hopes to be well received. I heard from good authority the other day that, although the historic drama has of late been unpopular, there is a hint of its reappearance at no distant date. So if you have turned out some historic scenarios, as is very likely,

put them by carefully and watch the signs of the times. You may find that they will come in very well a few months hence.

As a rule all good ideas work in somehow or other even if they are not acceptable in exactly the form in which you have first presented them. If your first efforts are rejected, do not destroy them in a fit of discouragement, but shelve them for a while, and if you do finally tear them up first copy into your notebook any really good suggestions they contain.

## CHAPTER XIII

### WRITING THE BRIEF SYNOPSIS OR OUTLINE

IF Nature has gifted you with the ability to utter a thought in pat terms, be thankful! If she has not been so kind, you must devote yourself to the cultivation of a faculty that is absolutely necessary to this profession. To have a rich, full imagination is a wonderful thing, but a discursive fancy has its pitfalls. When your story takes hold of you and enthuses you, such a wealth of ideas may bubble up in you that it will be hard for you to hold yourself in. There seems to be so much to say, so many interesting phases of your subject unroll before your eyes, that your fluent pencil races on and on and you fill your pages with uncalculating haste. This is an excellent thing to do and it is an essential preliminary to the next step in your work. You have followed here the process of Nature, who crowds a field with bloom and afterwards causes many buds to die off that the finer types may survive. From your abundance you may now undertake the process of selection. Cull from your big field the stronger and better ideas and discard the

rest. The law of natural selection which prevails everywhere applies also to ideas. You are the creative force and yours is the task of exercising wise judgment in discarding what is worthless and keeping what is good.

The art of selecting from a multitude of ideas the ones that go straight to your point and help your story is the very fine art of dramatic writing. But to this you must now add the practical craftsmanship of depicting these ideas in the fewest possible words. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, if you have not naturally the art of condensation, cultivate it from now on with all your might. Carlyle said, "Produce! Produce! Though it were the veriest fraction of an atom that were in you, produce!" But I say here, Condense! Condense! Gather up the fullest crop of ideas you can cull from your brain, put them into beautiful words, and then condense them to the briefest form possible. You are approaching the busiest of mortals with your storied idea. His first glance at it will be one of wearied cynicism. Yet he will take up your script with a spark of hope in his eye that it may be just the thing he has long been looking for. If you have been skilful enough to make the leading idea of your story so emphatic that it hits him like a blow, the shock will be a very pleasant one to

him. The scenario editor is a good sport. He is yearning for that author who has the knack of hitting straight out from the shoulder and will welcome with all his heart the story that is full of snap and punch.

Your brief synopsis is your card of introduction to the scenario editor. He may not be rude enough to have printed on his door the mandate, "Cut it short," but his keen eyes have an expression to that effect fixed in them. So cut your synopsis short, but leave nothing out of it. Make it full as regards ideas and brief as to words. The limit of words is twelve hundred, and if you can put your story into a third of this, all the better. An outline of the plot is all that is really indispensable. If your character cast is artistically wrought out, it will help to explain what is not dwelt upon in your synopsis.

Here follows a synopsis of the novel "Basil Everman," by Elsie Singmaster. Thanks are due to the publishers for courteous permission to use this.

#### BRIEF SYNOPSIS

THE little town of Waltonville is stirred with excitement over the college Commencement; visitors are arriving every hour, and among them is a young man from New York, foppishly dressed, speaking with an English accent, who seems not to belong to the crowd. He pursues an inquiry about Basil Everman, as if everybody ought to recognize the name, and

penetrating even into the college faculty with his quest, is finally invited by Mrs. Scott, who scents a notoriety, to her evening reception. Talking with her, Utterly learns, to his dismay, that Basil Everman is dead; his sister, Mrs. Lister, might be able to furnish the information that is sought. Utterly loses no time in hunting up Mrs. Lister, but she will say no more than that her brother Richard "used to write some"; "did n't know anything was published"; "died of an epidemic away from home." Utterly goes away raging at the stupid indifference to what he calls one of the greatest minds of the age; an equal to Poe. He shakes in the faces of every one he can get to listen, three magazines containing old stories once written by Basil, now unearthed by himself, and says he would give anything to get at any MSS. Basil has left behind him. But he is compelled to leave Waltonville without his stuff. He has, however, met Eleanor Bent, who has just written a story for his magazine, and in commenting upon her as a writer of promise has confirmed in the morbid mind of Mrs. Lister a strange, weird suspicion she has long cherished about Basil and Eleanor's mother; a quiet little woman now living a blameless existence, but about whose past gossip has had its say. Dr. Green's intimacy with her mother has given Eleanor some singular feelings, especially as Mrs. Bent shuns all questions Eleanor asks about her father. Mrs. Lister seriously believes that Basil, whose genius had seemed to her narrow mind "wildness," must have written the wonderful story Utterly had read her — "Bitter Bread" — from personal experience of sin; and when her son, Richard, tells of his love for Eleanor, she grows hysterical at the idea that he is in love with his first cousin, illegitimate child of her brother, and forbids the alliance with all her force. Miss Thomasina, a lovely spinster, who has taught Richard music, has encouraged the young man to become a musician, and the mother is as opposed to this career for him as to his marriage with Eleanor. Little Cora Scott, childish and sweet, is willing to obey her

mother and try to win Richard, but when she realizes how futile her efforts are, she has enough character to tell her father that she is going to make something out of her life, and will help him edit certain MSS. of Basil, found accidentally in the garret by Dr. Lister, despite Mrs. Lister's mistaken attempts to destroy what she believes sinful stuff. Richard, an admirable boy, full of the enthusiasms and hopes of youthful genius, resolves to have both his career and Eleanor, and goes without asking permission to Baltimore to play before a certain old master, friend of Miss Thomasina. He has left a note to his mother on his pincushion, but it has blown away and she believes that he — like her brother Basil — has gone away from home on some wild, wicked jaunt! Her fanatical mind is jerked back to sanity rather rudely by her husband's narrative of finding Basil's valuable papers half burned, and how he has rescued them and given them to Dr. Scott to prepare for publication. Then Richard comes in quietly, asserts that he is going to marry Eleanor, and she proclaims that he cannot — dare not — because of the close relationship, and also Eleanor's heritage of shame. Richard's father takes matters in hand and goes to Baltimore to investigate Basil's past, making Richard promise that he will not see Eleanor until he returns. But he gets a wrong impression from what he hears, and confirms Mrs. Lister's idea that Basil has been on intimate terms with Eleanor's mother. Richard repeats his intention to marry Eleanor. Dr. Lister privately interviews Dr. Green about the effect upon offspring of cousins' marrying. And Dr. Green darkly relates terrible tales. Mrs. Lister now resorts to Miss Thomasina, hoping for her influence with Richard, but Miss Thomasina hotly repels every insinuation that Basil has ever been "bad," and as she has her own suspicions about Eleanor's parentage she goes to Dr. Green to find out some things. She tells him that when she selected at a Baltimore store a grand piano for Eleanor, on the entreaty of the girl's mother, she saw on the counter of the store a check with his name on it. Dr. Green

stoutly denies everything, but soon afterward the truth as to the town mystery comes out. Eleanor's mother was married to the Doctor when both were in their youth; they separated and Mrs. Bent, as she called herself, came back to live in her girlhood's home, not knowing that he, too, had returned there. He furnished her funds in abundance, but she refused to live with him. He watched over Eleanor, and saw that she was well educated, but could not openly treat her as her father. The diseased idea of Mrs. Lister that Basil had been "bad" with Eleanor's mother grew out of her seeing the two together once on the street, when the woman was weeping and being comforted by the young man; whom, as it afterward appeared, she revered as her savior and friend. Eleanor, learning that Dr. Green is her father, accuses him of cruelty to her mother, and refuses his aid in life, declaring that she will go out into the world to "teach or something." But Richard has other views. We see him at evening seated on the bench of the old church organ, with Eleanor beside him, rolling out a fine anthem in a powerful voice. And in the background we see his mother confiding to Miss Thomasina that "She is a nice girl, and will make Richard an excellent wife." And in the dusk Miss Thomasina pores over a document that the mail has just brought to her cottage, telling her that "The admirers of Basil Everman are grateful to his friend, Miss Thomasina Davis, for permission to quote from his letters to her, to whom he wrote constantly and told all his aspirations and plans." We fade out on the gentle spinster's rapt gaze toward the hills, among which she seems to see the spirit of Basil hovering over the town where his genius was never known until she helped to give him his posthumous fame.

Now follows a synopsis of the novel "The Women We Marry," by Arthur Stanwood Pier, which the publisher has kindly given us permission to use.

## BRIEF SYNOPSIS

GEORGE BRANDON, returning home to Boston, after six months' wandering in Brazil, expects to take up relations with Rosamond Ramsay where he has left off. But he has taken things so much for granted that he has not written to her, and he has the shock of finding her upon the brink of marriage with Graham Rappelò, with whom she has fallen in love from seeing his wonderful horsemanship in a militia parade. He goes to the wedding, then, disgusted with life, resolves to work his passage over to Europe, in order to pass the time. But the foreman of the cattle ship being a brute, so disgusts him that he leaps overboard to swim back to Boston. He would have made it but for the fact that Rosamond and her athlete husband have taken passage on this same slow steamer, for their wedding trip, and Rappelò, seeing a man overboard, leaps to the rescue and drags George back. Mrs. Vasmer and her daughter Dorothy are also among the cabin passengers, and when Rosamond vaunts her husband's courage in saving some unknown man, both young women manage to get a sight of George and recognize him. George, who is a very fascinating fellow, almost regains his place in the heart of Rosamond, because she is feeling that singular and inevitable revolt against the little deceptions of married life which make young women an easy prey to the unmarried lover. They both passionately agree that a terrible mistake has been made, and George falls into the old error of believing that "love is free," and persuades Rosamond to elope on her very wedding journey! An accident foils this insane plan. Mrs. Vasmer gets a cable that her husband is undergoing an operation for appendicitis; almost immediately afterward, when Mr. Vasmer dies, Rosamond feels that she must stay with her friends in their affliction and breaks with George. Rosamond, who is at heart loyal, although temporarily flighty, greets her husband, who opportunely appears, with rapture, and George,

disillusioned, retires. Now, visiting the afflicted Vasmers, he turns to the bewitching Dorothy, and as the three of them go back home on the same steamer, he has the opportunity to be so useful and nice that Dorothy begins to love him. He proposes, is accepted, and again in Boston, the marriage takes place. The young pair begin housekeeping, in a modest house near Dorothy's old palatial home, and the bride soon gets into money troubles, from which her rich mother extricates her. George is proud and wishes to stand alone, but is obliged to give in and accept aid from Mrs. Vasmer. Many complications arise through Dorothy's worldliness, but a real disaster soon comes, when she makes the acquaintance of a young, ambitious, and singularly simple-minded writer and dramatist, Sidney Hanford. He reads his efforts to Dorothy, who criticises and helps him. George sees the intimacy without misgivings, loyally trusting his wife. But passion flames out in the hearts of the two congenial spirits, and the day comes when Dorothy bitterly regrets her marriage. Sidney reveals his love for her and she is conventional enough to refuse to let it go on; but bids him go to New York to work. She writes to him and continues to help him in his work, taking immense pride in him when he scores a triumph on the first night of the play she has criticised in the writing. Dorothy has a baby and is annoyed at its fretfulness; George is disappointed in her, but is patient. But now the young wife locks her door, and throws herself into the fashion vortex. Mrs. Vasmer's death leaves Dorothy an heiress, and as soon as the period of mourning is over she becomes thoroughly emancipated from domestic duties, takes long trips, and often meets Sidney. George suddenly realizes the meaning of her estrangement and writes a note to warn Sidney off. But this only makes things worse. Dorothy and Sidney cast aside all discretion, and openly seek each other's society everywhere. They agree to go away together, but on the very day a frightful accident smites down Rappelo, and Dorothy now repeats the experience fate once

before meted out to Rosamond; as Rosamond broke off a delirious folly to go to her friend, so Dorothy puts off Sidney to fly to Rosamond. Sidney fears that it is the end of things for him, but she says that their elopement is only postponed. But George has been summoned to attend Rappelò, and by the exertion of marvellous skill saves his life. In this atmosphere of heroic endurance, of tenderness, and of children's needs and innocent clinging to her, Dorothy's shallow selfishness drops off and she rises to the height of her better nature. We see the end of the story in a reconciliation between her and her patient husband and the uplift of a divine thought on both faces, as they pace the walks of the old garden, where the flowers lift up their faces to shine on them, in the glow of the setting sun.

Here follows the brief synopsis of the O. Henry story "Telemachus, Friend," of which I give the continuity in the following chapter. This synopsis was made by the Vitagraph Company, producers of the story.

#### SYNOPSIS

THE narrator, a "city feller," returning from a hunting trip, during the hour he has to wait in Los Piños discovers that Telemachus Hicks, the proprietor of the hotel, is reading the story of David and Jonathan of the Bible, and also that he, Telemachus, is rather sensitive about his "cauliflower" ear. The "city feller" concludes that from these details appends a tale, and he is not disappointed.

Telemachus had a friend as was a friend, and his name was Paisley Fish. So wedded were these two simple men in all affairs of their shiftless, harum-scarum lives, that when, lean and hungry for ease and pleasure, they rode into Los Piños and took their "eats" from the cushioned hands of the Widow

Jessup, that 280 pound — I mean carat — jewel of perfection, they resolved that in love their friendship should not be divided. Neither would take covert advantage of the other, neither should whisper soft words to the widow except in the presence of the other; with the Widow seated between them each one should play the game in the eyes of his friend.

But no two men are equals in love. From the start Telemachus had the winning advantage. He knew the secret art of stealing a woman's hand and keeping it. While poor simple Paisley dragged farther and farther in the rear droning his long, lugubrious narratives, tormented by the audible delights enjoyed at the other end of the bench.

And Telemachus, in his fashion, was faithful to his friend. Never did he take a kiss or a hug or offer or receive a lover's vow until Paisley had arrived. These delays annoyed the none too placid disposition of Mrs. Jessup, and but that she was wise enough to deduce that so faithful a friend must be a sterling husband in the making, she would have sent them both packing.

Up to the very trenches did their friendship endure. At the altar did not Telemachus hold up the minister until Paisley had swiped a boiled shirt from the store that had closed for the wedding day, and had joined the party properly clothed? But it was one wait too many even for the stout back of Mrs. Jessup when, the bridal night, and the chaste couch ready, Lem should sit out on the steps, "Waiting for old Paisley."

Thus the "cauliflower" ear!



## CHAPTER XIV

### CONTINUITY AND SCENE PLOT

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#### A MODEL PHOTOPLAY

Directed by HENRY-HOURY

Scenario by ROBERT A. SANBORN

“Telemachus, Friend”

An O. Henry Story

*NOTE: The Model Photoplay which follows here is reprinted by the courtesy of the Vitagraph Company of America. It is the actual working scenario from which the Vitagraph Picture “Telemachus, Friend” was made. Presented February 21, 1919.*



## TELEMACHUS, FRIEND

## CAST

TELEMACHUS HICKS

PAISLEY FISH, *his friend*

THE WIDOW JESSUP

NARRATOR OF STORY

INCIDENTAL CHARACTERS

## SCENE PLOT

## EXTERIORS

LOOKING OFF PORCH OF HOTEL, LOS PIÑOS

1-15-22-28-28-33-44-59-77-78

STREET LOOKING TOWARD SAME.....16-55

METHODIST CHURCH, SAME TOWN.....58-60-67

DRY GOODS STORE.....62

REAR OF SAME.....64

FREIGHT YARD, OPPOSITE HOTEL.....20-21-29

SALOON IN SAME.....9

BENCH UNDER TREES IN REAR OF HOTEL

32-34-39-41-45-46-47

ALONG RIVER IN GOLD COUNTRY.....4

ROAD BETWEEN RANCHES.....5-8

IN PRUNE OR ORANGE ORCHARD.....14

STEPS OF SMALL COTTAGE.....71-73-75-76

DEEP WOODS.....23

CAVE IN SAME.....24

## INTERIORS

WESTERN SALOON.....10-40-42-57-59

DINING ROOM IN LOS PIÑOS HOTEL.....17-18-19-30-70

BEDROOM IN SAME.....31-48-54-56

|                                 |                |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| HOTEL OFFICE IN SAME.....       | 33-35-37-53-61 |
| MRS. JESSUP'S ROOM IN SAME..... | 49-51          |
| HALL OUTSIDE.....               | 50-52          |
| ROOM IN CITY HOTEL.....         | 25-27          |
| HALL OUTSIDE SAME.....          | 26             |
| METHODIST CHURCH.....           | 63-66-68       |
| DRY GOODS STORE.....            | 65             |
| COTTAGE BEDROOM.....            | 72-74          |

### INSERTS AND STILL LIFE

PAGE OF BIBLE, OPEN TO 1ST SAMUEL, CH. 18, VERSES 1-5

INSERT SCENE 1-3 —

OWL IN WOODS.....INSERT SCENE 32

STREAM IN WOODS — NIGHT.....INSERT SCENE 32

PILE OF TOMATO CANS THROWN ON DUMP NEAR R.R. — NIGHT

INSERT SCENE 32

CAT EATING AT SAME — NIGHT.....INSERT SCENE 32

SHELF OF BOOKS IN HOTEL OFFICE.....INSERT SCENE 36

PAGE OF "OTHELLO" IN ONE VOLUME SHAKESPERE

INSERT SCENE 36

**TELEMACHUS, FRIEND**

BY

**O. HENRY****SCENE PLOT**

**SUB-TITLE:** THE SUMMIT HOUSE IN LOS PIÑOS, NEW MEXICO,  
LAY ROASTING ON THE DESERT ALKALI, AND  
TELEMACHUS HICKS, ITS PROPRIETOR —

**CLOSE UP 1**     **EXTERIOR.** Looking off the porch of the hotel, across the blistering hot plaza to the R.R. Station, a desolate place with but little life or motion at this time of day, or ever. A few freight cars sidetracked, a few horses hitched to the rail in front of hotel.

**NOTE.** (It does not particularly matter whether this is taken in a mountain or desert country. In one passage O. Henry refers to the San Andres Mountains, as surrounding the town. I put the location on the desert just to throw an ironic touch on the name of the hotel.)

**OPEN DIAPHRAGM SLOWLY TO SHOW**

In immediate foreground, close up, sits Hicks, his back to camera, his face three quarters turned so features are visible. He is reading the Bible, his feet resting on the porch rail. His forefinger follows the text slowly, painfully. Immediately at his right hand shadow: **CUT OFF**, so as not to show the Narrator of story who is approaching stealthily at Hicks's right hand. As Hicks reads, he is completely

absorbed, and shows signs of deep and tender feeling. He wags his head sadly, his shoulders heave slightly as with sobs, he sighs over his lost friend, now and then his hand goes up to his eyes, and brushes away tears. The text of passage he is reading is hardly discernible. After a moment of this comedy-pathos, **FADE INTO**

**INSERT:**

Close up of open **BIBLE**, at **I SAMUEL**, Chapter 18, first four verses, Hicks's gnarled forefinger painfully following the words, describing **JONATHAN's** devotion to **DAVID**.

**BACK TO  
CLOSE UP 1**

Hicks finishing the passage, lowers Bible on knees, and looks off over the heated desert. Then with a sudden start, he dodges to left, as though expecting some one approaching at his right to deal him a blow. His dodge throws him into a crouching position in his chair, at the same time he flings up his right hand and claps it over his right ear. After an instant in this position, as the expected blow does not fall, Hicks relaxes, and turns his face slightly to his right, and looks up to see who it is.

**TURN CAMERA TO RIGHT TO TAKE IN**

Narrator of story (O. Henry, or not) who stands in smiling perplexity at Hicks's right and rear, having come up on tip-toe to see what Hicks is reading. Narrator is dressed as "city feller" out on a hunting trip, now returning. He has a gun or two in cases, some bags, overcoat on arm, etc.

As Hicks sees who it is, he grins sheepishly, drops his hand from ear, and straightens in chair, saying "Oh, it's you, is it? Sit down." And he indicates a chair beside him. Narrator sits down, placing bags and guns near him, his eyes fixed on the maimed ear, still showing a puzzled interest in the ear and in why Hicks started so abruptly and defensively. As he sits he smiles over incident, and turning to Hicks, asks:

**INSERT:** "MR. HICKS, I'VE GOT AN HOUR BEFORE A TRAIN RELIEVES ME OF LOS PIÑOS. WOULD IT BE TOO DISAGREEABLE TO YOU TO TELL ME WHAT KIND OF AN ANIMAL CLAWED THOSE IMPROVEMENTS INTO YOUR EAR?"

**BACK TO** Hicks looks at the Narrator, but in not unfriendly way, and indicating his ear, asks,  
**CLOSE UP 1** "What, this?"

**CLOSE UP 2** Hicks's right ear which is badly deformed as though it had been partly torn off and not skillfully put back in place, bunches of cartilage grown out, etc. Hicks's hand feels of the ear, questioningly.

**CLOSE UP 3** SAME AS 1  
The Narrator answers, "Yes, that is what he means." Hicks thinks a moment, then replies frankly:

**INSERT:** "THAT EAR," SAID HICKS, "IS THE RELIC OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP."

**BACK TO** To illustrate his point, Hicks indicates the  
**CLOSE UP 3** passage in the Bible, which he holds so that Narrator can read it;

REPEAT INSERT OF OPEN BIBLE, if thought necessary.

Narrator reads, but still looks puzzled, waiting for Hicks to tell the story that will connect the text, the dodge, and the maimed ear. Hicks begins slowly, saying:

INSERT: "WELL, I HAD A FRIEND LIKE THAT ONCE, AND HIS ENTITLEMENT WAS PAISLEY FISH. SIDE BY SIDE FOR SEVEN YEARS WE —"

BACK TO CLOSE UP 3      Hicks begins his yarn, the Narrator, lighting a cigar, and leaning forward to listen, as Hicks speaks very low. FADE OUT AND INTO

SCENE 4      EXTERIOR. Camp along a stream in gold country.

Hicks and Fish are squatting on ground at mess, cleaning up the last of their grub. Both are still hungry, they eye the last biscuit, and fragments in frying pan, and after trying to force the remnants on each other, they scrupulously divide, and are still hungry. They rise to ransack their provisions and find they are down to the last crumb. Discuss what they had best do, they look over the gold they have panned and find it very slight for all their work. They cheer each other up, and decide to go on to where they can get a square meal. They begin to break camp. DIAPHRAGM DOWN AND OUT. OPEN TO

SCENE 5      EXTERIOR. Along road in ranching country.  
A rancher is working in his field when Hicks and Fish walk up, leading a mule with their

packs. They stop and strike the rancher for a job. He indicates that they can join his sheep camp up in the hills. They agree to his terms, he points out direction, and they start off.

**SCENE 6**

**EXTERIOR.** A sheep camp in the hills. **EVENING.**

A bunch of herders are out smoking after supper. They see Hicks and Fish approaching, make jokes about them. The two men join the party, inform leader that they have come to take a job. They have to take a job. He looks them over and gives them food which they are to take along with them to their posts. He sends a guide along with them, and they start off.

**SCENE 7**

**EXTERIOR.** Up in the hills. **NIGHT.**

Hicks and Fish are on watch over a band of sheep, which may be seen lying about, or feeding. They are lonesome, huddled together, trying to keep each other's spirits up. The coyotes howl, it is desolate, and neither of them likes the job, vowing they will give it up in the morning and go down to town. They express their disgust for sheep and toss stones at them irritably. **FADE OUT.**

**SCENE 8**

**EXTERIOR.** Same as 5, but near to gate in the fence.

Hicks and Fish come down the lane with their mule, waving goodbye to the rancher, pocketing the money he has paid them off with. At

the gate they stop, one has tobacco but no papers; he borrows a paper of the other, gives him tobacco in exchange; they search pockets for matches and find just one. They light up and go off down road, glad to get away.

**SCENE 9**

**EXTERIOR.** Front of saloon in small Western town.

Hicks and Fish come up, their mouths watering, rubbing their hands in prospect. Each invites the other in to have a drink; they enter, arms about each other.

**SCENE 10**

**INTERIOR.** A rough Western bar.

Two or three cowboys are drinking. There is some more or less rough badinage between the two sheepmen and the cowboys, but the latter, finding that Hicks and Fish are quite ready to back each other up, let up on them. A drummer who is hanging around takes a liking to Hicks and Fish, and gets acquainted, buys them drinks, and shows them the patent churn he is travelling with. He offers to let them try selling it, they are quick to grasp its advantages and like the proposition. The cowboys go out laughing at them. As they listen to the drummer explain his churn, **DIAPHRAGM DOWN AND OUT AND INTO**

**SCENE 11**

**EXTERIOR.** A rancher's yard.

Hicks and Fish are displaying their churn to the farmer's wife, her daughters, and children, all much diverted by the article and by the

clever patter of the men. One of them offers to take pictures of the children, and lines them up in front of a camera which he gets from his pack. They are unable to sell a churn and profits have been scarce. So while one holds the attention of the women and children, the other slips around the house.

**SCENE 12**      **EXTERIOR.** A chicken house on same ranch.

Hicks or Fish slips in, and pilfers a hen from the yard, but as he does so a farm hand comes around corner and catches him. Hicks drops the hen and runs around corner for his partner.

**SCENE 13**      **EXTERIOR.** Same as 11.

The two men make a hurried getaway, there is a half hearted chase, and the two men escape. **FADE OUT TO**

**SCENE 14**      **EXTERIOR.** In a prune orchard or orange.

The two friends up in the tree, picking, fairly close up. They are eating about as many as they pick and enjoying themselves hugely. As they exchange juicy fruits, and eat with blissful smiles, **DIAPHRAGM DOWN AND OUT AND BACK TO**

**CLOSE UP 15**      **EXTERIOR.** Same as 1.

Hicks is sighing regretfully over those happy days, Narrator smoking with one eye on the railroad and another occasionally cast at his watch. Hicks says:

**INSERT:** "THINKS I," SAYS HICKS, "NEITHER HOMICIDE NOR FLATTERY NOR RICHES NOR DRINK CAN MAKE TROUBLE BETWEEN ME AND PAISLEY FISH. BUT ONE SUMMER ME AND PAISLEY GALLOPS DOWN TO THIS TOWN IN PURSUIT OF SURCEASE AND LEVITY."

**BACK TO** Hicks indicates how they galloped down the  
**CLOSE UP 15** main street, full of easy money, brave and light hearted, and up to the hotel. As he talks  
**DIAPHRAGM DOWN AND INTO**

**SCENE 16** **EXTERIOR.** Evening, looking toward the hotel from up the street.

Hicks and Fish ride in, pull up, admire the town a moment, then spy the hotel, and with great enthusiasm for the "eats" they ride on at a gallop, are seen to pull up in front of hotel in distance. They hitch up as two or three travelling men run out of hotel for railroad station opposite. Hicks and Fish enter hotel.

**SCENE 17** **INTERIOR.** Dining-room in small Western Hotel. **EVENING. LAMPS LIT.**

The Widow Jessup is getting rid of the last of a party of travelling men. She is hot and at the end of her patience; they have been jollyng her unmercifully, enjoying provoking her to temper. She is flushed and belligerent, flinging back some pretty strong language at them, which only makes them laugh the louder. As they exit, leaving a few last shots behind them, she picks up a cup or something and throws it. Her expression changes from anger to dismay,

as she sees Hicks and Fish coming down the hall, and seeing in them possible prey for her matrimonial net she changes her tactics, drops the drummers from her mind, and hurriedly exits into kitchen to prepare for these prospective victims. As she disappears Hicks and Fish enter, one of them having a piece of the broken cup in his hand, and both looking cautiously around for the one who hurled it. They stop in doorway, cautiously, but smelling the frying smells from kitchen, begin to smile, and growing bolder, they enter, sit down at table, pry up their plates (with a knife) from the red oilcloth. Hicks conceals the piece of broken cup from the Widow. (Business here of prying of plates from oilcloth.) Begin a study of the bill of fare. They give cautious glances from time to time toward the kitchen. Hicks still has the piece of cup which he lays down on table. They are like two kids over the crude delights of the bill of fare. NOTE: MIGHT CLOSE UP BILL OF FARE.

**CLOSE UP 18** INTERIOR. Of door between kitchen and dining room.

The Widow appears in doorway, bearing a big plate of delicious looking biscuit, a big oily smile on her face, tempting and more than a mouthful. The two men are seen in distance, heads together over bill of fare. She coughs and looks shy as their heads turn to her.

**SUB-TITLE:** "NOW THERE WAS A WOMAN THAT WOULD HAVE TEMPTED AN ANCHOVY TO FORGET HIS VOWS."

SHE WAS NOT SO SMALL AS SHE WAS LARGE;  
AND A KIND OF WELCOME AIR SEEMED TO MITI-  
GATE HER VICINITY."

## SCENE 19

INTERIOR. Same as 17. Fairly close up to table.

The Widow is coming up to table, conscious of her power, both these thin, hungry, lonely men feasting their tired eyes upon her buxom figure and beaming face and superlative biscuits. She sets latter down on table, and stands arms akimbo waiting pleasantly for their order. They are so fussed that they get balled up over the bill of fare, stuttering and choking, so that she comes to their rescue, saying that she has just what they want, makes a playful pass at closing their mouths, and with an arch smile retires to kitchen. Left alone the two men follow her with their eyes, then with a hostility that they have never known between them before, but that is growing now, partly to their shame and regret, they turn to each other. The Widow returns promptly, bearing a great platter of fried liver and potatoes, and their eyes flash back to her with jerks, as she serves them. Shyly they stuff their mouths, she standing by, entertaining them with a "lot of garrulousness about the climate and history and Tennyson and prunes and the scarcity of mutton, and finally wants to know where we came from." Both men raise their eyes to answer as she leans down encouragingly. Fish has his mouth full:

INSERT: "'SPRING VALLEY,' SAYS I."

"'BIG SPRING VALLEY,' CHIPS IN PAISLEY."

BACK TO  
SCENE 19

BUT CLOSE UP of Paisley.

His mouth stuffed full as he pronounces his words. TURN TO

CLOSE UP of Hicks. As Fish corrects him, Hicks's eyes glare his disapproval. CUT TO

CLOSE UP of Widow, as the two men glare at each other, she smiles to herself, winking, knowing now she has got one or the other.

INSERT: "I KNOWED THEN THAT THE OLD FAITHFUL DIOGENES BUSINESS BETWEEN ME AND PAISLEY FISH WAS ENDED FOREVER. DARN HIM, I HEARD HIM CALL IT 'SPRING VALLEY' A THOUSAND TIMES."

BACK TO  
SCENE 19

Hicks is glaring at Fish, who chokes over his mouthful, unable to bear the situation any longer, feeling the just reproach of his friend, determined to win the Widow if he can for himself, too shy to look up at her. Fish pats himself on the back, the Widow comes to his help. Hicks rises and goes to Fish, hits him a terrific swat on the back. Fish coughs up half his lunch, and much humiliated, rushes out of the room with his napkin over his mouth. For a moment Hicks and the Widow look at each other, then Hicks's eyes drop shyly, he tries to utter an apology for his friend, then he excuses himself.

INSERT: "I BECKON, MA — MA — MAM, I'D BE — BET — BETTER S — S — SEE WHAT'S HAPP — HAPPENED TO PA — PAISLEY."

**BACK TO  
SCENE 19**

Hicks rushes from the room, and left alone, the Widow blushes happily to herself, then recollects that, neither of them has paid, her brows knit angrily, then she smiles to herself, knowing they will be back, and laughing heartily, she begins to clear the table, singing.

**SCENE 20**

**EXTERIOR. NIGHT.** Along tracks in railroad yard, or on the main line.

Fish is sitting on the track, in far distance, hard to see in the dusk. Into foreground comes Hicks looking for his friend. He raises his voice and calls, "Paisley!" He is a little anxious about his friend, listens and looks about.

**CLOSE UP 21**

Same as 20, only close up to Fish on track.

Fish is sitting on the track in the dusk, hacking at a railroad tie with pocket knife, savagely. When he hears Hicks call, he looks up and answers shortly. Hicks is seen in distance, he comes toward Fish and looks down on him with hostility. Finally he sits down alongside. Fish still has his knife in hand, open, as Hicks sits down, and they stare at each other, more or less helplessly, at the parting of the way between the new life and the old, half regretting the old. Hicks's eyes glance down at knife, he takes it gently from Fish's relaxing grip, his eyes on Fish. He closes the knife and hands back to Fish, who slips it into his pocket, their eyes all the time on each other. Hicks then raises his hand and drops it on Fish's shoulder. As he does so, **DIAPHRAGM DOWN AND OUT AND OPEN TO**

**CLOSE UP 22**    **EXTERIOR.** Same as 1.

In an apparently continuous motion with action at end of preceding scene, Hicks drops his hand on shoulder of the Narrator, leaning forward and staring into his eyes as he had into Fish's asking Narrator:

**SUB-TITLE:** "MISTER," SAYS HICKS, "WHAT IS FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND MAN? IT IS AN ANCIENT HISTORICAL VIRTUE ENACTED IN THE DAY WHEN MAN HAD TO DODGE FLYING TURTLES AND —"

**SCENE 23**    **EXTERIOR.** A dark wood.

This scene requires a monster of prehistoric times. If this cannot be managed, use a lion or an elephant, preferably roaring. But if possible rig up at least the long neck and ugly head of a Plesiosaurus to appear thrust high up through the foliage of the trees as a primitive man runs into scene away from beast, falls and covers his face expecting to be eaten, screaming at top of voice. Into the scene from opposite direction, that is, from foreground, runs another man also in skins. He grasps the situation, picks up a huge rock or wields his war club, rushes the animal and drives it away. Then returning, he picks up the fallen man who at first resists, thinking his rescuer is the animal, and bears him away.

**SCENE 24**    **EXTERIOR.** Mouth of cave in woods.

The rescuer brings in his friend and lays him down on his back, gives him water; the man

sits up (Chaplin fashion), sees that he is safe, takes the other man's face between his hands, and with a broad, happy smile, kisses him on cheeks; they embrace, fast friends.

**SUB-TITLE:** "AND," HICKS CONTINUES, "MEN HAS KEPT UP TO THIS DAY THE HABIT OF STICKING BY EACH OTHER —"

**SCENE 25**      **INTERIOR.** Dark — of hotel room.

In the dusk a single man is seen flying about the room in terror, warding off rushes of imaginary animal, throwing things, when door opens and another man reels in, letting in light from hall. After a moment he lights gas in room and finds his friend, cowering on floor by bed. Both are drunk, but the first one is in worse shape, of seeing things. He yells as his friend arouses him, pointing out a monster in the mirror. His friend, ready to believe his friend, but not seeing the thing himself, assures his friend that he will protect him. He fights the imaginary animal, at last picking up an ice water pitcher and hurling it at the mirror, then comes back to his friend, puts his arm about him, comforts and shields him.

**SCENE 26**      **INTERIOR.** Corridor in hotel outside room.

People are coming out of rooms, disturbed and raging, a bell boy arrives and hears their complaints; he knocks at door, then opens.

**SCENE 27**      **INTERIOR.** Same as 25.

The bell boy enters, asks the two men what all this noise is about. The first one only whim-

pers, but the second man describes his valiant battle and defeat of the beast, pointing out the broken mirror. The boy replies in disgust:

**SUB-TITLE:** "OH, HELL, THERE AIN'T NO SUCH ANIMILES! GO TO BED!"

He marches up to the men and leads them to the bed, pushes them over upon it, where they sprawl, and sleep. Boy then puts out light and exits.

**SCENE 28**      **EXTERIOR.** Same as 1.

Hicks is actively describing man's fidelity to his friend, through combat and privation, stops with a long sigh, saying:

**SUB-TITLE:** "BUT FIGHTIN' FOR A FRIEND IS ONE THING, AND MAKIN' LOVE FOR HIM IS ANOTHER. IT AIN'T TO BE DONE. THE SMILES OF WOMAN DRAWS AND DISMEMBERS THE CARCASE OF FRIENDSHIP."

**SCENE 29**      **EXTERIOR.** Same as 20. Fairly close up to the men.

The men are agreeing to differ, to make each his honest open fight for the Widow, their friendship is restored but on a new basis. They talk and nod agreement. Hicks is the leader, he makes the proposition to "let the best man of us have her. I'll play you the square game, etc."

Fish agrees almost tearfully. They rise and shake hands formally but heartily over agreement, they start up the track and disappear around a freight car.

**SCENE 30**      **INTERIOR.** Same as 17. Fairly close up to the table where the two men sat.

The Widow, masterfully, is making up her mind which one of the men she is going after, which one is easier. She ponders a moment, then with a blush and a shy wriggle, she begins counting on the two plates in their places for breakfast, "He loves me, he loves me not," plainly so her lips may be read. Or else, she takes up the plates as she intones the words, rapping each plate smartly down on the table, the first one that breaks being the one, as she counts, **DIAPHRAGM CLOSSES UP TO HER HEAD**, and her last expression is one of triumph and bliss as she breaks a plate. Might cut here the piece of broken plate falling to floor. Which one cannot be told, saying: "He loves me!" She curls her head over with an arch expression as **DIAPHRAGM CLOSSES**.

**SCENE 31**      **INTERIOR.** A hotel room in Summit House. **DARK.**

Open doors and light enters, also the two friends. One lights up. They look at each other, and nod confirmation of agreement. Fish has an ache between shoulder blades, takes on a little. Hicks is sympathetic, gets his bottle of "opodeldoc." Fish bares his shoulders, and with rough tenderness Hicks rubs Fish between shoulder blades. **FADE OUT.**

**SUB-TITLE:** "THINGS HAPPENED IN A SORT OF HURRY. AT ONE SIDE OF MRS. JESSUP'S EATIN' HOUSE THERE WAS A BENCH —"

## SCENE 32

**EXTERIOR.** The bench under some trees in rear of hotel, path leading up from bench to hotel.

Widow is about sitting down, "a fresh pink dress on and almost cool enough to handle." She is very careful to arrange her dress to best advantage. Self conscious, but composed and confident, she sits there, waiting for the men. Soon Hicks appears coming down the path, more or less spruced up, hair slicked down. He stops once and looks about to see if Fish is coming, then advances, bows elaborately before Widow, asks permission to sit, which she gives graciously. He sits down a proper distance from Widow. There is a moment's silence, she waiting, he on the lookout for Fish, keeping his agreement not to take any advantage. She wonders what he is waiting for, and looks at him rather peevishly. He clears his throat suddenly, waves his hand stiffly at the trees, saying:

**SUB-TITLE:** "I MAKE A FEW SPECIFICATIONS ABOUT THE MORAL SURFACE OF NATURE AS SET FORTH BY THE LANDSCAPE —"

**INSERT: A.**     **EXTERIOR.** Deep woods. NIGHT.  
CLOSE UP of an *owl*, blinking or hooting.

**INSERT: B.**     **EXTERIOR.** A small stream rippling and shimmering under the moonlight, talking to itself.

**SUB-TITLE:** "AND THE WIND OUT OF THE MOUNTAINS WAS SINGING LIKE A JEW'S HARP IN —"

**INSERT: C.**      **EXTERIOR.** CLOSE UP to a pile of *empty tomato cans*, thrown down beside the railroad track. Have the loose labels fluttering in a wind.

**BACK TO  
SCENE 32**      Hicks is sorely tempted by the contiguity and the atmosphere to get busy before Fish arrives. He wipes his brow, controls himself with great effort, still watching for his friend. The Widow, waxing amorous, begins to edge closer to Hicks, he watching her apprehensively, but with a heart beating riotously. He stiffens up, feeling "a sensation in my left side, like dough rising in a crock by the fire." She turns to him and, with a languishing look, says: "Oh, Mr. Hicks, when one is alone in the world, don't they feel it more aggravated on a beautiful night like this?" Like a soldier he looks at her with pathetic reproach and rises to his feet, saying with a bow:

**SUB-TITLE:** "EXCUSE ME, MA'AM," SAYS I, "BUT I'LL HAVE TO WAIT TILL PAISLEY COMES BEFORE I CAN GIVE AUDIBLE HEARING TO LEADING QUESTIONS LIKE THAT."

She looks up at him, her temper on edge, as he explains how long he and Paisley have been pals, and how they had agreed to take no advantage of each other in love, then she throws back her head and lets out a shout of laughter. Hicks starts with the sound as though a gun had gone off behind him:

**INSERT:**      Scene, same as Insert C, close up 32.  
**EXTERIOR.** Deep woods. NIGHT. A cat eat-

ing something on ground, starts and dashes away, frightened.

**SCENE 33**      **INTERIOR. Hotel Office.**

Clerk alone in office, half asleep, when he wakes with a sudden start, and looks about as though he had been called. At the same time Fish wanders in, miserable, impatient to see Widow, but at a loss how to approach her, not possessing Hicks's *savoir faire*. The clerk, seeing no one else, glares at poor Fish, saying belligerently:

**SUB-TITLE: "WAS THAT YOU LET OUT THAT WAR WHOOP?"**

Fish, somewhat bewildered, shakes his head, confused, and the clerk goes on, asking him what he wants to wake a fellow up for. **CUT TO**

**SCENE 34**      **EXTERIOR. Same as 32. NIGHT.**

The Widow is stifling her gusty laughter with a pocket handkerchief, while Hicks stands stupidly, ill at ease. **CUT BACK TO**

**SCENE 35**      **INTERIOR. Same as 33.**

Fish, scratching his head, blurts out flat he wants to see a book. Clerk asks what kind of a book. Fish wants a book on love, but is afraid to ask specifically. Clerk rudely directs him to a small bookcase. Fish wanders toward it. Clerk with a sniff and a shrug, settles down for another nap.

**SCENE 36**      **INTERIOR. Same as 33. CLOSE UP to a shelf of books, odds and ends of titles, that have been**

left by guests and picked up in one way and another, almanacs, Bible, a complete Shakespeare, a few popular novels, etc.

Fish's eyes light up as they fall on the Shakespeare, the very book he wants. He takes it down and opens it to "Othello," a play he once saw at a stock theatre. He finds a familiar page, reads laboriously.

**INSERT: A PAGE OF "OTHELLO" SHOWING ONE OF THE NOBLE MOOR'S LONG NARRATIVE SPEECHES TO DESDEMONA, DESCRIBING HIS ADVENTUROUS LIFE. FISH'S FINGER FOLLOWING THE SIGNIFICANT WORDS:**

His eyes begin to shine, his imagination absorbs the resounding eloquence, he assumes a heroism of his own. He too is a grand fellow, he has lived an adventurous life, and with his experiences to draw on he can win the hand of a princess. He reads aloud, louder and louder. **CUT TO**

**SCENE 37**      **INTERIOR.** Same as 33. Fish in distance, clerk in foreground.

Clerk is disturbed by Fish's ranting. He looks up angrily, and yells out to Fish, who does not hear at first. Clerk repeats his shout, and Fish turns, puts up the book, marches over to the clerk, his eyes afire, and towering over the desk, thunders out a few polysyllabic words of rebuke, rises to dignified height and stalks out, the clerk staring after him with open mouth.

**CLOSE UP 38**      **EXTERIOR.** Same as 1.

Hicks leans over to Narrator, saying that the Widow's giggling was getting on his nerves.

He imitates the giggle, putting his hand to his mouth to suppress it as she did, then he grabs Narrator's hand, putting his face close to his:

**SUB-TITLE:** "THEM GIGGLES WAS BEGINNIN' TO STAMPEDE MY HERD, AND FOR A MINUTE MY FRIENDSHIP FOR PAISLEY GETS SUBSIDIZED."

**CLOSE UP 39** EXTERIOR. Same as 32. NIGHT.

Hicks has sat down at furthest edge of bench, looking stiff and stuffy. The Widow casts him a languishing glance now and then, and bursting into giggles as she sees his solemn face, which giggles she chokes with her handkerchief. Hicks gets hotter and hotter. He wriggles, until, unable to stand her mirth any longer, he leans over to her, his hands on his knees, pushes his face aggressively up to hers, saying:

**SUB-TITLE:** "MA'AM, WOULD IT BE CONVENIENT TO PLUG THAT EXHAUST LONG ENOUGH TO ANSWER ME IF A 'H' AIN'T EASIER TO WRITE THAN A 'J'?"

To his great surprise the Widow first stares at him and then, with spreading delight, she throws up her arms and flings them about his neck. He is sorely tempted, but his strongest thought is for his friend and his promise. He stares at the Widow's flushed face and pursed mouth for an instant, stammering:

**SUB-TITLE:** "IF YU — YOU DON'T MUH — MUH — MIND, MA'AM, WE'LL WAIT FOR PUH — PA —"

Hicks's sentence is broken off as he looks up and sees Fish coming down the path. He

stops, open mouthed for an instant at his friend's perfidy, Hicks looks ashamed. The Widow is furious, she is mad enough to hit him. She controls herself, but rises, choked with wrath, Fish waiting in the meanwhile. The Widow turns to follow Hicks's abashed look, and sees Fish standing there. She stares at him a moment, then with a shrug she turns back to Hicks, and coming close to him she says, in a low voice:

**SUB-TITLE:** "MR. HICKS, I'D ASK YOU TO HIKE YOURSELF DOWN THE GULCH, BUT, — WELL, YOU'RE TOO GOOD A FRIEND NOT TO MAKE A GOOD HUSBAND."

The Widow gives him a long significant look, and sits down again. Fish, thinking Hicks has got a good call down, grins his satisfaction, nods head understandingly, and approaching, he bows low to the Widow, who looks bored and indifferently at him, not making any sign. Fish sits down beside her, and clearing his throat, looking straight in front of him he begins.

**SUB-TITLE:** "IN SILVER CITY, IN THE SUMMER OF '98, I SEE JIM BARTHOLOMEW PROMOTE HIS OWN DEMISE BY PAINTIN' IN THE BLUE LIGHT SALOON —"

Fish rambles on with his story, and as he does so, oblivious to what the others are doing, enjoying his own voice and story, and imagining the others are held spellbound, the Widow, first disgusted with the incident, moves by slow hitches nearer and nearer to Hicks. DIA-PHRAGM DOWN AND OUT AND OPEN TO

## SCENE 40

INTERIOR. Blue Light Saloon.

Jim and the Chinaman are rolling over and over on the floor, the others are grouped around, enjoying the scene, more come running in, there is a package of laundry open and spilled on the floor. Jim gets the Chinaman under him and begins to paint him black.

DIAPHRAGM AGAIN BACK TO

## SCENE 41

EXTERIOR. CLOSE UP same as 32. NIGHT.

Fish is spinning his yarn, having a fine time, while the Widow is now cuddled up. Hicks is trying to play fair, which gets on the Widow's nerves so that she turns a glance of disgust on poor Fish who is saying:

SUB-TITLE: "IT WAS ON ACCOUNT OF A CROSS BARRED MUS-LIN SHIRT THAT —"

The Widow turns from Fish with a shudder, then beamingly turns to Hicks, who feels for her hand; she puts her face temptingly up to his:

TURN CAMERA TO FISH'S FACE, the others not visible. Fish is saying:

SUB-TITLE: "AND JIM HE THOUGHT — WHAT WAS THAT NOISE?"

Fish's face, in the midst (but here back to Fish) of his story; he stops and turns a startled look at the other end of the bench:

TURN CAMERA TO

HICKS AND THE WIDOW, as they break from a long loud smacking kiss. Hicks looks up at Fish's question and grins and blushes.

TURN BACK TO

ALL THREE AS BEFORE, Hicks grinning, Fish staring at him reproachfully, the Widow ignoring Fish. Hicks explains blandly to poor Fish that he and the Widow have decided to hitch up, Fish —

SUB-TITLE: "PAISLEY HE WINDS HIS FEET AROUND A LEG OF THE BENCH AND KIND OF GROANS. 'LEM,' HE SAYS, 'IT'S GOIN' ON SEVEN YEAR. WOULD YOU MIND NOT KISSIN' MRS. JESSUP QUITE SO LOUD?'"

Lem answers, "Why, certainly, the quiet kind of kiss is just as good." The Widow, with one bored glance back at Fish, again wraps herself up in bunches of love, Hicks putting his arms about her in a big hug. Fish braces himself and makes one more heroic attempt to turn the tide his way, turns around a bit toward the Widow to hold her attention, but not looking at her. He goes on:

SUB-TITLE: "THIS CHINAMAN WAS THE ONE THAT SHOT A MAN NAMED MULLINS IN THE SPRING OF '97, AND —"

SCENE 42      INTERIOR. Same as 40.

Jim is rising up from floor, leaving the Chinaman writhing with his hand to his ear. Jim

is explaining, picking up the laundry and showing the shirt, why he got into trouble with the Chink, wiping his mouth of the blood, when the Chink rolls over, pulls a gun and almost gets Jim. He is disarmed and they hustle the Chinaman out, Jim telling them of the shooting of Mullins the year before in almost the same way, graphically: DIAPHRAGM OUT AND TO

**CLOSE UP 43** EXTERIOR. Same as 1.

Hicks now leans back, laughing, chuckling, over poor old Fish, saying:

**SUB-TITLE:** "FROM THE START I HAD PAISLEY HOBbled. PAISLEY'S SCHEME WAS ALL WRONG. LEARN TO PICK UP A WOMAN'S HAND AND HOLD IT, AND SHE 'S YOURS."

Hicks gives a demonstration, using Narrator's hand. "Some men grab at it like they was going to set a dislocation; some take it up like a hot horseshoe, and hold it off at arms' length; most of 'em drag it out before the lady's eyes. Them ways are all wrong. I'll tell you the right way." He describes a man picking up a rock to throw at a Tomcat on the fence, pretending he does not see the cat, until he is ready to throw, etc. "Don't let her know that you think she knows you have the least idea she is aware you are holding her hand." Hicks illustrates all the wrong ways expressively, and then shows the right way, holding Narrator's hand down under and looking off blissfully unaware. CUT TO

**CLOSE UP 44** Hicks's hand holding Narrator's hand between the two chairs. **FADE THIS OUT AND INTO**

**CLOSE UP 45** Hicks's hand holding the Widow's between them as they sit on the bench, the Widow's hand parts from the clasp and there is enough of her figure seen to show that she and Hicks have gone into a clinch; the bench trembles:

**CLOSE UP 46** Same as 32. **FISH'S FACE ALONE.**

Fish again breaks off his long-winded, melancholy tale as the bench shakes and he with it. He turns a look at Hicks and the Widow, saying miserably:

**SUB-TITLE:** "LEM, IF YOU WAS A TRUE FRIEND YOU WOULD N'T HUG MRS. JESSUP SO HARD. THE BENCH SHOOK ALL OVER."

**CLOSE UP 47** **EXTERIOR.** Same as 32.

At this the Widow turns sharp and short to poor Fish, withering sarcasm, referring to his "Hubbard squash you call a head," that she has put up with him because he is Mr. Hicks's friend, but it's time for him "to wear the willow and trot off down the hill." Hicks tries to butt in with a defense of Fish, that he promised him a square chance. The Widow cuts Hicks off short, and turns again to Fish, who sits with his mouth open. The Widow, seeing that no words can move him, rises, takes Fish by the ear, and pulls him to feet, walks him off up the path, disappears with him, comes

back smoothing out her dress, and sitting down by Hicks, plunges into his arms. DIAPHRAGM OUT.

SUB-TITLE: "WELL, A MONTH AFTERWARD —"

SCENE 48      INTERIOR. Same as 31.

Fish in his undershirt, suspenders hanging, is giving devoted attention to getting Hicks ready for wedding, has forced him into his boiled shirt, white waistcoat, and is helping do the white tie. They have much trouble, Hicks miserably uncomfortable, stiff, afraid to breathe. The tie done, Fish gives Hicks's shoes some extra licks, stands off to admire his handiwork, opens door for Hicks to go out. Hicks feeling as if he were in a straight jacket, too stiff to speak, signals gratitude to his friend, — gulps, and moves like an automatic out of room. Fish closes door, sighs heavily, then starts to dress himself, finds no shirt to suit him, gets in a wild hurry, throws things around floor. FADE OUT.

SCENE 49      INTERIOR. Mrs. Jessup's room in hotel.

OPEN DIAPHRAGM GRADUALLY on Widow standing in front of bureau mirror, having her veil arranged, her dress pinned up in back, women fussing about her, in their element.

SCENE 50      INTERIOR. Hall outside Widow's room.

Hicks appears, painfully moving down hall to Widow's door, with elephantine grace, smirk-

ing horribly, tiptoes to door, thinking he has a right to go right in, but pauses in a sudden sweat, whispers hoarsely through keyhole, then knocks timidly, hearing the women's voices within.

**SCENE 51**

**INTERIOR.** Same as 49.

There is confusion within as they hear Hicks's whisper and knock. The women are scandalized, Widow in a flurry, dress not pinned in back; they array themselves protectively about her, and one goes to door, opens an inch.

**SCENE 52**

**INTERIOR.** Same as 50.

Hicks now all of a tremble at his temerity, and as woman puts head out, he starts back in terror; she gives more than an earful, shoves him away down hall; he backs off, butting into wall, etc., and out of sight, door is closed.

**SCENE 53**

**INTERIOR.** Same as 33.

A number of men in office, some entering from outside, more or less glorified by their garments. Hicks comes down the stairs and is greeted with cheers which embarrass him exceedingly, the men swarm about him, offer their congratulations. He stands this as long as he can, then busting his collar buttonhole, he flings off dignity and invites them all into bar. They follow cheering and jostling.

**SCENE 54**

**INTERIOR.** Same as 31.

Poor Fish is getting more and more desperate; no shirt, he is all of a sweat, looks out of win-

dow to see what chance he has of getting to store without attracting attention.

**SCENE 55**      **EXTERIOR.** Street in front of hotel, same as 1.  
Carriages, all sorts of rigs, are coming into town, women with families of children, etc., parading on way to church, whole town and countryside are turning out.

**SCENE 56**      **INTERIOR.** Same as 31.  
Poor Fish sinks back from window, his eyes popping out, at his wits' end, sits down on bed, mops brow.

**SCENE 57**      **INTERIOR.** Bar of hotel, very plain.  
Hicks is standing treat, getting mellow, great excitement, when a boy runs in with news that the bride is on her way to church. He indicates outside.

**SCENE 58**      **EXTERIOR.** Street in front of Methodist Church.  
Up the street toward church, comes the Widow with her retinue of bridesmaids and neighbors. The minister and wife are waiting in church door.

**SCENE 59**      **INTERIOR.** Same as 57.  
Hicks takes fright, afraid of being too late, he gulps whiskey, and followed by the crowd, rushes out.

**SCENE 60**      **EXTERIOR.** Same as 58. Closer up to steps of church.

Minister is explaining to Widow and her party that Hicks has not arrived yet. She is very much upset, much commotion and indignation among women, they know he is hitting the booze, etc., sympathy for her, etc. Finally Hicks and his crowd are seen hurrying across street from hotel; they come up, Hicks, more or less hilarious, is for kissing his bride right away, but is prevented by the indignant women. He is ordered about, humiliated, told what to do, is pushed into church, the Widow waiting with her party. More and more people arrive, and crowd up to church.

**SCENE 61**      **INTERIOR.** Same as 33.

Office is empty, Fish tiptoes down the stairs, looking about apprehensively. He is much disordered, suspenders still hanging, no white shirt, coat thrown on, etc. He tiptoes to door, and looks out, finally seeing party enter church he makes a dash out.

**SCENE 62**      **EXTERIOR.** Street, front of only dry goods store.

Fish dashes across street, up to door, finds it locked, sign: "CLOSED FOR THE WEDDING." In a worse plight than ever, afraid of being seen, he scratches his head, and at last desperate, decides to break in; he steals about to rear of store.

**SCENE 63**      **INTERIOR.** Altar of church, looking out into audience, a small country affair, rude and simple.

Hicks, stiff and uncomfortable, waits at altar, church is crowded, bride is marching up aisle. Hicks feels terribly conspicuous and looks wildly about for Paisley; he asks the minister where Paisley is.

**SCENE 64**      **EXTERIOR.** Rear of store.

Fish is climbing into back window of store, disappears.

**SCENE 65**      **INTERIOR.** Dry goods store.

Fish enters, looks about, opens boxes, etc., finds shirts, collars, etc., begins to dress up.

**SCENE 66**      **INTERIOR.** Same as 63.

The ceremony is about to begin, Hicks and Widow side by side, minister with book, Hicks still fidgeting because Fish is late. As minister is beginning service, Hicks coughs, has a spell, halts wedding, arrests minister, saying:

**SUB-TITLE:** "PAISLEY AIN'T HERE," SAYS I. "WE'VE GOT TO WAIT FOR PAISLEY. A FRIEND ONCE, A FRIEND ALWAYS — THAT'S TELEMACHUS HICKS."

Every one is surprised, wondering what it is all about, the Widow's eyes snap, but minister stops to argue the matter with Hicks.

**SCENE 67**      **EXTERIOR.** Same as 58.

Fish, finishing his dressing on the run, flies across the square and up steps into church.

SCENE 68      INTERIOR. Same as 63.

As every one is rising and impatiently asking questions, Fish enters and pushes his way down aisle, and much to the Widow's disgust, aligns himself at her other hand, making his excuses in stammering words. Hicks grabs his hand and congratulates him on being there. The service begins, Fish keeping close to Widow. DIAPHRAGM TO

CLOSE UP 69      EXTERIOR. Same as 1.

Hicks with a laugh, says to Narrator who is beginning to rise, looking across at R.R. and at watch, but listening closely with much amusement:

SUB-TITLE: "I ALWAYS IMAGINED," SAYS HICKS, "THAT PAISLEY CALCULATED AS A LAST CHANCE THAT THE PREACHER MIGHT MARRY HIM TO THE WIDOW BY MISTAKE."

Hicks laughs again but shakes his head and with a sigh in memory of Fish, goes on. DIAPHRAGM DOWN AND INTO

SCENE 70      INTERIOR. Same as 17. DAYLIGHT.

The spread of "tea and jerked antelope and canned apricots" is over, people moving out, the Widow dressed in her travelling gown. Last of all, Fish, who has been hovering about like a fifth wheel, comes up, sniffing a little, assures Hicks that he has acted on the square and he is proud of him, shakes his hand hard, turns to the Widow, tries to make her a speech,

gets stuck, and bolts from room. Hicks sinks down in the chair he first occupied, tired out, the Widow looks at him fondly, then with an arch smile comes over, picks up the bill of fare, holds it out to him, he lifts head, grins, and warming up, says he will take a kiss. She sinks in his lap, they kiss. DIAPHRAGM DOWN

**SUB-TITLE:** "THE PREACHER RENTS US A COTTAGE FOR THE NIGHT, AND THE NEXT MORNING WE WAS GOIN' ON A BRIDAL TOWER TO EL PASO. ABOUT TEN O'CLOCK I SITS DOWN ON THE FRONT STEPS AND —"

**SCENE 71**      **EXTERIOR.** Front steps of a small cottage. NIGHT.

Hicks comes out, sits down, pulls off his boots, lights a pipe, reminiscing over old times, quite forgetting that he is married and has any responsibilities.

**CLOSE UP 72**   **INTERIOR. NIGHT.** Close up of a chair beside a bed, head of bed only, gas lighted but dim. A woman's shoe is kicked off and falls under chair, and then another; in a moment a white garment is thrown over back of chair, just the hand shown for an instant. CUT TO

**CLOSE UP 73**   **EXTERIOR.** Same as 71. NIGHT.

Lem sits smoking, a perfectly happy and oblivious bachelor. He is kind of wishing old Paisley would turn up.

**SCENE 74**      **INTERIOR. NIGHT.** Same as 72, close to window.

The gas is turned off just as scene opens, and in the dusk the figure of the Widow in her nightgown is seen to come to window, and peer out, first curtain then window is raised.

**CLOSE UP 75** EXTERIOR. Close up to window.

As the window is raised, the Widow's face is seen in the opening, then SUPERIMPOSED ACROSS OPEN WINDOW FLASHES

**SUB-TITLE:** "AIN'T YOU COMIN' IN SOON, LEM?"

**CLOSE UP 76** Cut to. EXTERIOR. NIGHT. Same as 73.

Hicks starts, looks about in a daze, blinking, then laughs sheepishly, saying so his wife can hear him:

**SUB-TITLE:** "WELL, WELL!" SAYS I, KIND OF ROUSING UP.  
"DURN ME IF I WAS N'T WAITIN' FOR OLD PAISLEY TO —"

Hicks is in the act of tumbling off the steps, he rolls over on the ground away from the house, sits up, clasps one hand to right side of his head, passes the other across his eyes, stunned, he sits there a moment, then as he painfully rises, DIAPHRAGM DOWN AND OPEN TO

**SCENE 77** EXTERIOR. Close up. Same as 1.

Narrator has risen, is collecting his baggage, about to go for train; Hicks finishing story, his hand to his ear, has risen also, saying:

**SUB-TITLE:** "I THOUGHT," CONCLUDED TELEMACHUS HICKS, "THAT SOMEBODY HAD SHOT OFF MY EAR WITH A FORTY-FIVE. BUT IT TURNED OUT TO BE ONLY A LICK FROM A BROOM HANDLE IN THE HANDS OF —"

Hicks looks warily around, his face glows with pride as he indicates to Narrator who turns, bags in hand:

**SCENE 78**      **EXTERIOR.** Same as 1, but facing front door.

Mrs. Hicks stands in the doorway, a commanding figure, fat and smiling but with a businesslike glint in her eyes and some suspicion of her husband. She bows condescendingly to Narrator. **DIAPHRAGM DOWN AND OUT.**

**THE END**

**The Riverside Press**  
**CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS**  
**U . S . A**







